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Late FELLOW of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

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CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

OF THE

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THE
Breast-Plate
OF
FAITH and LOVE;

OR, THE
GROUND AND EXERCISE OF
FAITH AND LOVE,
As set upon CHRIST their OBJECT, and express'd
in GOOD WORKS, Explain'd.

IN THREE PARTS.

By *JOHN PRESTON*, D.D.

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M. DCC. LI.

1850-1851

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THE
BREAST-PLATE
OF
FAITH and LOVE.

PART III.
OF LOVE.

GALATIANS V. 6.

*For in Jesus Christ, neither Circumcision
availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision,
but Faith which worketh by Love.*

IN the fourth Verse of this Chapter, the
Apostle affirms, That there is no Justifi-
cation by the Law: For, saith he, *If
you are justified by the Law, you are fallen
from Grace:* That is, you cannot be
Partakers of that Justification which is by Grace:
Because to have it by the Law, and to have it by
Grace,

Grace, are opposite. To confirm this, he gives a Reason in this Verse: For, saith he, *In Christ Jesus*, (that is, to make a Man acceptable to GOD thro' *Christ Jesus*) *neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision*: neither the Keeping of any Part of the Ceremonial Law, or the Omission of it, nor the Keeping of the Moral Law, or the Breaking of it, will help to ingraft a Man into *Christ*, or to make him acceptable to GOD through *Christ*. Nothing will do it, but only Faith; and that not an empty, idle Faith; but as he addeth further, such a Faith as *works by Love*. So that you have two Parts in this Text: 1. A Negation of that which doth not make us acceptable to GOD through *Christ*; it is not our being circumcised or uncircumcised, or any Thing of that Nature. 2. An Affirmation of, what it is that makes us Sons of GOD; it is only Faith and Love; such a Faith as is accompanied with Love and good Works; so that you see, He removes all Works of ours; all Works, not only of the Ceremonial, but also of the Moral Law, consider'd as the Means of Justification; because they are opposite to Faith; they exclude Faith, and Faith excludes them, so that they are as well to be shut out, as the Works of the Ceremonial Law. None of these, saith the Apostle, will do it. For you must know, the Way to Salvation is contrary to that of Damnation. Look how you lost the Kingdom of GOD, so you must get it. As it was not our particular Breaches of the Moral Law that lost it; but the Fall of the first *Adam*: So we must go in again into Paradise by the same Way that we went out; that is, by being made Partakers of the Righteousness of the second *Adam*. Our Righteousness is not the Way that the LORD hath appointed Mankind to be saved by; but the Receiving of *Jesus Christ* and his Righteousness. But you must remember,
that

that you must take Him, so as to love him. And it must be such a Love, as is fruitful in good Works; not an empty, idle Love, that is, a Love in Shew only, but it must be a Love in Deed and in Truth.

IN the Handling of these Words, I will consider first, what it is that puts us into the happy State of Life and Salvation; and that is, *Faith that works by Love*. Hence it is clear, that Faith and Love are the two Pillars, upon which our Salvation is built. Of Faith we have treated at large before; it remains now to speak of Love; And here we will deliver this Point to you, that,

WHOSOEVER loves not the LORD *Jesus*, is not in *Christ*, and by Consequence, is in a cursed and damnable Estate. Now because this is necessarily required, that you have Faith and Love, or else you are not in *Christ*, and cannot be acceptable to God thro' *Christ*: So our Business will be to open unto you, what this Grace of Love is.

LOVE is nothing else, but a Disposition of the Will, whereby it cleaves to some good Thing agreeable to itself. And this Disposition shews itself by two Effects: 1. It creates, in the Man that has it, a Desire to have the Thing it loves preserved. 2. Of having it his own; and therefore it causes him to draw near to it, or else to draw the Thing near to himself. This is the Nature of Love. But this further you must note, that there are divers Kinds of Love.

FIRST, There is a Love of *Complacency*, when a Man is well pleased with a Thing; when there is some Agreeableness between the Thing loved, and the Frame of the Soul: So the Master loves his Scholar that is every Way towardly: So the Father loves his Son, as one in whom he is well pleased. 2.

There is a Love of *Friendship*, that goes beyond this Love of Complacency, when a Man both loves and is loved again: So a Man loves his Friend, and is loved again by his Friend. Lastly, there is a Love of *Dependence*, when one loves a Person upon whom all his Good depends.

Now, we are said to love the LORD, with the Love of Complacency, because He is a full adequate Object to the Soul: We love Him with a Love of Friendship, because there is a mutual Love; He loves us, and we love Him; as the Spouse saith, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his*: Again, we love Him with a Love of Dependence, for we rely upon Him for all our Happiness and Comfort. Now this Love, wherewith we love any Object that is suitable to us, hath Degrees; and that Love is stronger, as the Object of that Love is more adequate and full; as it is more free from Mixture of Evil: And as it is more high and supernatural; as we depend upon it more, so we love it more. All these you shall find in GOD. Now lay these general Principles, and we will make Use of it afterwards: Only, before I pass on, observe

THERE is a natural Love that GOD hath placed in the Heart of every Man, wherewith every Man loves himself, his Children, his Wealth, or any Thing by Nature that is good to him. And this natural Love, hath two other Loves hanging on it: The one is a sinful Love, that carries it the wrong Way to love sinful Things: The other is a spiritual Love, which sets Banks, as it were, to the Stream of natural Affection; and not so only, but elevates natural Love, and makes it an holy Love: So that all natural Love is to be subordinate to this, being given us to help us to go that Way that spiritual

ritual Love should carry us, even as the Wind helps the Ship, whereas otherwise it should have been driven with Oars: And therefore the LORD, to help us to love those Things that are suitable and convenient to us, hath in Mercy put a natural Affection into our Hearts, which yet is to be guided by spiritual Love.

As all Love comes from Similitude and Agreeableness, and consequently where there are two of a contrary Disposition, there must needs be Hatred; so every Man naturally hates GOD, by Reason of that Opposition and Contrariety which is between the Nature of the one and the other. Therefore that Love may be wrought in the Heart of Man towards GOD, this sinful Nature of ours must be broken in Pieces, and again be new moulded and framed. The love of GOD then is wrought in us by these two Things: First, by breaking our Nature in Pieces, as it were; that is, by Humiliation, and by the Law. And Secondly, By moulding it anew, which is done by Faith, and by the Gospel.

WHEN a Man's Heart is broken, he is willing to take *Christ* as a LORD, as a Husband; and when *Christ* hath discovered his Will to take him, and the Man hereupon resolves to take *Christ*, then there ariseth a holy, a constant, conjugal Love, wherein they are rooted and grounded. This is the Love we are now to speak of. So that to prepare us to love *Christ*, we must come to look on Him, as upon that which is suitable and agreeable to us. And again, as one that is willing to receive us: And that you must mark diligently. Therefore we will give you this Definition of Spiritual Love out of that which hath been said: *It is an holy Disposition of the Heart, rising from Faith,*
whereby

whereby we cleave to the LORD, with a Purpose of Heart to serve Him, and to please Him in all Things.

THIS Love is so necessary to Salvation, that he that hath it not, is in a cursed and damnable Condition; he is not in *Christ*, if he do not love Him; as our LORD saith, *He that believes not shall be damn'd*, so we may say of Love; for there is a Tie between all these, Faith, Repentance, and Love. And therefore we find these Words put promiscuously: Sometimes he that believes not, shall not be saved, sometimes he that repents not, shall not be saved; sometimes he that obeys not, sometimes he that loves not, shall not be saved: And therefore the Scripture is clear in it, and there is good Reason for it.

FIRST, You know there is a Curse belongs to him that breaks the Law. Now when a Man loves not, he breaks the whole Law: For as Love is the Keeping of the whole Law, so the Want of Love is the Breach of it. So though a Man may do many Things, though he may keep the Sabbath, deal justly, hear the Word, yet because it is not out of Love, he breaks the whole Law. And therefore he that loves not, is in a cursed and damnable Condition.

AGAIN, you know, in the Law of GOD, an Adulterer ought to die. Now he that loves not the LORD, is an Adulterer, that is, he is false to the LORD that should be his Husband. And when he loves not the LORD, he doth love somewhat else: And doth it not deserve a Curse to prefer Pelf before the LORD? That he should *love Pleasures more than GOD*? That he should *love the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of GOD*? And this is the Case of every Man that loves not the LORD, he loves
the

the World: And he that loves the World is an *Adulterer*, saith St. *James*.

BUT if it be of such Moment to love the LORD, then let every Man look to himself, and consider whether he have in his Heart this Love to the LORD *Jesus*; for whatsoever you do, though you pray never so constantly, though you sanctify the Sabbath never so diligently, do what you will, yet if you love Him not, He regards it not. Indeed, when a Man doth love Him, the LORD bears with much; but when you love Him not, perform never so much, He rejects all: And therefore learn by this to know yourselves, and to judge of your Condition. It may be, when we confess our Sins, we have no Thought of this, that we love not *Christ*, or at the least, we have not considered what a Sin it is not to love Him; but you may know the Sin by the Punishment of it: *Let him be accursed that loves not the LORD Jesus*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Let these Words be sounding in your Ears, compare your Hearts to them. Sometimes cast your Eye on the one, and sometimes on the other, and see if it be not absolutely required to love the LORD. And again, reflect on your Hearts, and see if you be in the Number of those that do love Him.

BUT take Heed herein, that you deceive not yourselves, for it is the Manner of Men, when we press the Love of *Christ* upon them, to say, "I hope I love the LORD; I hope I am not such a Miscreant, as not to love Him." Yea, but consider whether thou do or no. When a Man loves his Wife, his Friend, his Son, his Sport, he knows he loves it; he hath the Sense of that Love in himself. Therefore consider with thyself, whether thou hast any such stirring Affection towards the
LORD

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LORD *Jesus*, or no. Dost thou feel thy Heart so possessed with Him? Art thou sick of Love, as the Spouse saith in the *Canticles*; That is, are you grieved when He is absent? Are you glad when you can get into his Presence? For there is a Kind of Painfulness in Love: And all Painfulness is of a quick Sense. Therefore, if you love the **LORD**, when there is a Distance between Him and you, when He doth not look on you as he was wont, there will be Painfulness and Grief in it; as well as much Joy and Gladness when you have Him. Therefore, let this be one Way to examine your Love to *Christ*, see whether you feel Joy for his Presence, and Grief for his Absence.

Again; as it is an Argument of a Man that loves not the **LORD**, that he walks not with Him, that he doth not converse with him: So it is of one that loves Him, that he walks and converses with Him Day by Day. Now, to walk with the **LORD** every Hour, every Moment to consider what the **LORD** doth to you, what his Carriage is to you, what Passages of his Providence concern you; and on the other Hand, what you do to Him, what Carriage there is between you: I say, this Converse is an Argument of Love. Shall a Wife profess Love to her Husband, and never come where he is, and never be in his Company? So, will you say, you love *Christ*, and not be frequent in Prayer, seldom converse with Him, seldom speak of Him? When you love your Friend, you are with him as much as you can, you love to speak with Him, and of him: So it is with the **LORD**, if you love Him, certainly you will love his Company, you will love his Presence.

YET further, Love is a diligent Thing: When a Man loves a Thing, he is diligent to obtain it; he spares no Labour, no Cost, he cares not what he

he doth, so he obtain it. Do you take this Pains to draw near to GOD, to get Grace, to excel in it? Are you willing to put yourselves to it, to deny yourselves in your Ease, to take Time from other Busineses, and to bestow it this Way? Are you content to put yourselves to a harder Task, to forbear Things that are pleasant, to take Pains for the LORD? If you love GOD, it will make you diligent to obtain Him.

AGAIN, Love is a Thing that is well pleased with itself; as we say, *Love desires no Wages*, it is Wages enough to itself, it hath Sweetness enough in itself, desires no Addition. And therefore if you love the LORD, you shall know it by this; you serve Him, and serve Him with all your Might, with all your Strength, tho' He should give you no Wages. The very enjoying of the LORD, the having Communion with Him, the having the Assurance of his Favour, so that you can say, *My Beloved is mine, and I am my Beloved's*, is Wages enough to a Man that loves; to such a Man, though there were not Heaven to follow, though there were not a present Reward, nor a future, yet he would love the LORD; and if he love Him, there will be a Delight to serve Him; and enough to him, is the LORD's Favour, as *Christ* saith, *It is my Meat and Drink to do my Father's Will*.

BUT besides all this, If you love the LORD, it will constrain you to please Him, to obey Him in all Things, to do what He requires; you cannot chuse but do it; as the Apostle saith, *2 Cor. v. The Love of Christ constrains us*. It makes a Man do it, whether he will or no; it is like Fire in his Breast, he cares for no Shame; it makes him go through Thick and Thin. It is true, I may lose my Reputation; you may reckon me a Mad-man; some Men do think me so; but that is Nothing to

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me: I must do it, the Love of *Christ* constrains me. So that where Love is, it is such a strong Impulse in the Heart, that it carries one on to serve and please the LORD in all Things, as a Man is carried in a strong Stream.

THEREFORE, when thou shalt find in thyself Joy for the Presence, and Grief for the Absence of the LORD *Jesus*; an earnest Desire to be continually in Company with Him, from Day to Day; when thou art exceeding diligent to get an Assurance of his Favour, and to excel in that Grace, without which thou knowest thou canst not please Him; when thou art well-pleased with what He doth, and thinkest it enough that thou hast the LORD Himself, though thou shouldst have no other Wages; and when thou findest such a strong Impulse in thine own Heart, that carries thee on to serve the LORD; then you love Him: And if you love the LORD, you are in *Christ*.

Now, we must beseech you to examine yourselves by these Rules, and if you feel you want this Love of *Christ*, we will lay down some Motives to beget it in you. If we were able to present Him to you as He is, we should effect this Thing; but that must be the Work of the Holy Ghost; notwithstanding we will briefly open to you such Reasons as we find used in the Scriptures.

AND first, Let this move you to love Him, that He is worthy to be beloved. Now what is it that makes any Thing worthy of Love, but the Excellency that we find therein. Now in the LORD there is all Kind of Excellency: Whatsoever is amiable under the Sun, all that you shall find in Him more abundantly. If ever you see any Thing excellent in any Creature, any Thing amiable

able in Man, any Beauty, any Virtue, any Excellency, all these must be more abundant in Him that made these Creatures. And therefore, if you have any Love, (as there is no Man without some Love or other) to any Creature that seems beautiful to you, think with yourselves, there is more Beauty in the LORD. If ever you see in any Man any Nobleness, any Holiness, any Excellency of Parts or Disposition, know that it is more abundantly in the LORD *Jesus*. Let these Rivers lead you to that Ocean, to that Abundance of Excellency that is in the LORD. And if you love any Creature, let it be with a little Love. Let your Affection be proportionable to the Object. As all Excellency exceeds in the LORD, so let your Love exceed towards Him. *Love Him with all your Soul, and all your Strength.* He hath that in an omnipotent Manner, that is but sprinkled among the Creatures. Every Creature hath some Imperfection in it, there is Somewhat in it may cause Aversion, there is no Man but hath some Weakness, no Creature but hath some Want, some Defect in it; but in the LORD there is no Want, there is Nothing in Him but that which is perfectly amiable.

SECONDLY, consider the Easiness of the Condition required of you after all that He hath done for you. It is no more than to love Him. If He had put you on a harder Task, you ought to have done it. If He had said to us, You shall offer your Children to Me in Sacrifice, you shall give your own Bodies to be burned, who could have said any thing to this? For He is the LORD, the great GOD; our sovereign Creator: but when the LORD asks no more at our Hands but to love Him, will you deny Him? *Moses* urged this Motive to the *Israelites* when he had described to them what the LORD had

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done for them ; *And now saith he, what doth the LORD require of thee for all this, but only this, that thou love the LORD thy GOD?* As if he should say, the LORD might ask much more at thy Hands ; if He had, thou hadst no Reason to deny it : But all that He requires is that thou love Him : And wilt thou deny this unto Him?

THIRDLY, consider who it is that hath planted this Love in thy Heart : Is it not the LORD that gives thee this very Affection? And when He calls for this Love again at thy Hand, doth He call for more than his own? Shall He not gather the Grapes of his own Vineyard? And shall He not eat the Fruit of his own Orchard? He hath planted in us these Affections, and they ought to be returned to Him.

FOURTHLY, consider you are engaged to love the LORD, and that should be a great Motive to you : *You are Witnesses that you have chosen the LORD this Day to serve Him,* said *Joshua* to the People, *Josh. xxiv. 22.* As if He should say to them, You are not now to choose, you are now engaged. You cannot go back, you have professed, you have chosen the LORD to serve Him, therefore you are Witnesses against yourselves. So I may say to every Man that hears me, you are engaged to love the LORD : Why? Because you are baptized in his Name, you have taken Him for your Master, and for your Father, therefore He may challenge it at your Hands. *If I be a Father, where is my Honour? If I be a Master, where is my Fear,* *Mal. i. 6.* He may challenge it justly, for you are his; He hath bought you, yea, He hath over-bought you; He hath paid a Price more worth than us all, He hath bought us with his Blood : And what hath He bought us for, but to be his; that is,

to

to love Him? Therefore, when we love Him not, we rob GOD of ourselves, we do an unnatural Thing; it is Treachery and Injustice in us. As you know, it is one Thing in a Woman that is free from her Husband, to neglect a Man that is a Friend; but when she hath engaged herself, and the Match is made, it is Adultery. So every one of us that loves not the LORD, sins the more, because He is engaged to Him, *Deut. xxxii. 13. Thou forsookest the strong GOD of thy Salvation*, thou forsakest Him to whom thou art engaged; He is the strong GOD of thy Salvation. Therefore consider this; for seeing you have such an Affection as Love is, you must bestow it somewhere; Somewhat you must love: And you must know again, it is the best Thing you have to bestow, for it commands all in you; and where will you bestow it? Can you find any Creature upon whom to bestow it rather than the LORD? Will you bestow it upon any Man? The LORD exceeds them, as *David saith, Who among the Gods is like Thee?* That is, take the most excellent among Men, that are reckon'd as Gods, yet who among them is like unto Thee? Or what will you bestow your Love upon? Your Wealth, or your Pleasures? You must think the LORD will take this exceeding ill at your Hands, that you should bestow this Affection elsewhere, than on Him, to whom you are engaged.

FIFTHLY, An especial Motive for a Man to love the LORD, is to consider what He hath done for him in Particular. Remember what Passages have been between the LORD and you, from the Beginning of your Youth. Recount the particular Kindnesses and Mercies you have received from the LORD: It is He that doth all for us; it is He that feeds us; it is He that cloaths us; we

have not a Night's Sleep, but He gives it to us; we have not a Blessing, but it is from his Hand; there is not a Judgment that we escape, but it is through his Providence: The Consideration then of these Particulars, should be as so many Sparks to breed in us a Flame of Love towards the LORD. Think then, how unreasonable a Thing it is, that you should forget this GOD, that you should not think on Him, that you should not love Him that hath done thus much for you.

LASTLY, Consider that the LORD loves you, for that is the greatest Motive to win us to love Him; for as Fire begets Fire, so Love begets Love. This was the Cause that *S. Paul* loved the LORD, *He that loved me, and gave Himself for me*, saith he, *Gal. ii. 20.* Consider this Love of the LORD, and let this beget in you a reciprocal Affection towards Him: Put all together, and consider the LORD is worthy to be beloved; that He requires Nothing but Love of you for all that He hath done for you; that GOD planted Love in your Hearts, and therefore doth but call for his own; that He hath done you so many Kindnesses, that you are so engaged to Him, that you are not now to chuse; and let these Things move thee to love Him; at least as He is worthy to be beloved, bring your Hearts to this, to desire to love Him.

You will say, "We may desire long enough, but how shall we be able to do it?" First, You must pray for it; come to the LORD and tell Him, That you desire to love Him; that you would fain do it, if you could, and beseech Him not to deny you that Request, that you know is according to his Will: And be assured, that the LORD will not refuse you, especially if you beg it importunately at his Hands.

IF you ask, How Prayer enables us to love GOD? I answer, Partly by obtaining at GOD's Hands, a Power so to do; for when you cry earnestly for it, He cannot deny you. When the Lame and the Blind were importunate, He never neglected any, but healed them; so when you cry to the LORD and say, I would fain love thee, but I cannot; will He not be as willing to heal thy Soul, to give thee Legs to run after Him, and Eyes to see Him, as he was to heal the Lame and the Blind? Certainly He will.

BUT besides that, Prayer brings us to converse and to have Communion with GOD, and by that Means, Love grows between us: As you know when you converse with Men, it is a Means to get Love. Again, the LORD delights to shew Himself to a Man that is much in Prayer, yea, at such a Time, for the most Part; as he shew'd himself to *Christ* when he was praying, as He did to *Moses*, to *Cornelius* and others. And again, Prayer exerciseth this Love, it blows up a Spark, and makes it a Flame. Therefore much Prayer begets much Love: If you would be abundant in Love, be fervent and frequent in Prayer.

You will say, "Prayer is a general Means for other Things; why do you put it as a particular Means to get Love?" The Reason is, because Love in an especial Manner, is a Gift of the Spirit, a Fruit of the Holy Ghost; and it must be a peculiar Work of the Spirit to beget it. It is true, *Faith comes by Hearing*, and Hearing begets Faith; which is done likewise by the Spirit: But Love is more peculiarly than other Graces, the Gift of the Holy Ghost. None are able to love *Jesus*, but he in whom the Holy Ghost hath planted this Affection: Therefore the Way to get it, is earnestly
to

to pray, to acknowledge the Power of the Holy Ghost, to go to Him, and say, LORD, I am not able to do it: This Acknowledgement of the Power of the Holy Ghost is the Way to prevail.

ANOTHER special Means to enable you to love the LORD, is to consider your Sins, what you are, what Hearts you have, and what Lives you have led, and how gracious GOD hath been to you. You know *Mary Magdalene* loved much, because she had much forgiven her; that is, she had great Sense of her Sins, the LORD had opened her Eyes to see what she had been: And because she saw her own Vileness, and thereby the Goodness of the LORD, who had forgiven her, *she loved much*. For when we are humble and little in our own Eyes, and the LORD shall come and shew Mercy on us; when a Man shall see his Sin, and think with himself, *I am worthy to be destroyed, I can expect nothing but Death*; and the LORD shall come suddenly, and tell him, *You shall live*, and shall reconcile Himself to him; This will command Love. So when we consider how we have behaved ourselves to Him, and yet He hath offered us Peace, and yet He saith, *Return, and I will forgive you*; this should work on the hardest Heart. Therefore consider your Sins. But remember it is not enough to say, "I am a Sinner;" but come to particular Sins, as *Paul* did: *I was a Blasphemer*, says he, *I was a Persecutor, and yet the LORD had Mercy on me*: So be you likewise ready to say, I have committed such and such Sins, it may be Uncleanneſs, it may be Sabbath-breaking and Swearing, and yet the LORD hath been merciful, or is willing to receive me to Mercy. *If a Man's Wife play the Harlot, will he return to her?* No, he will put her away, and give her a Bill of Divorcement: But when the LORD saith, *But you have done it*, and
done

done it oft, and *with many Lovers*; and yet return again to me, and I will receive you to Mercy; this should melt our Hearts, and cause us to love the LORD.

I PROCEED now to shew you what Properties of Love we find in the Holy Scriptures.

You shall find this to be one Property of Love, it will be content with nothing but Love for Love. If one love another, let the Beloved do never so much, let him be never so kind in his Actions, never so bountiful, yet except the Lover have Love again, he is content with Nothing. Indeed when we do not love a Man, we can be content though his Heart go another Way, so that we enjoy Profit by him; but it is the Nature of true Love to desire to be paid in its own Coin. Now if thou love the LORD *Jesus*, if thou mightest have all the Blessings that He could bestow upon thee, if He should open his Hand wide, and compass thee about with Abundance, yet, without an Assurance of his Love, thou wouldst not be content therewith, thy Heart would not be at Rest.

AGAIN, if you love the LORD *Jesus*, you will also love his Appearing. It is certain every Man that loveth the LORD *Jesus*, hasteneth to the Coming of the LORD; and it must be so in Reason. For if you love any, you must needs love their Presence: And seeing the Apostle hath chosen out this Note, why should not we press it in our Examination of ourselves, whereby we may know whether we love the LORD *Jesus* or no? Whether we desire to be with the LORD? Whether we can say with St. Paul, *we desire to be at Home, and to be with the LORD?*

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THIRDLY, It is another Property of Love, he that loveth is very ready to speak of the Party beloved, to fall into his Praises, and to keep no Measure in it: So is it in this Love to the LORD *Jesus*. Do you profess to love the LORD, and yet never delight to speak of Him? nor delight to hear others speak of Him? Mariners are delighted to talk of their Voyages, and Soldiers of their Battle; and if you delight in the LORD, certainly your Tongues will be much in speaking of Him, you will be ready to do it upon all Occasions. *Out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh*: And if Love to the LORD abound in your Hearts, this Love will be expressed in your Tongues, upon all Occasions: And therefore, you may judge of the Measure of your Love by this.

AND now what will you say for yourselves, that you speak no more upon those several Occasions, that you meet with in the World? Is it because you are ashamed to make an open Profession of *Christ*? Certainly it is not a Sign that you love the LORD *Jesus*: for he that loveth, is never ashamed; because whom a Man loveth, he magnifieth, he prizeth much, he hath a high Esteem of: And therefore that Bashfulness and Fearfulness that you object, will not keep you back, if you love the LORD in Sincerity. Or is it because you cannot speak? Because you are not able to do it as well as others? Why? When you love any, that Love will teach you to speak, it will quicken the dullest Invention: Love sharpeneth, and maketh the rudest Tongue eloquent. It is the Nature of Love to set the Heart to work, and when the Heart is set on Work, the *Tongue will be as the Pen of a ready Writer*. You know how the Apostle sets it forth, *Our Heart is enlarged to you*. Love openeth the Heart wide, and the Heart openeth the Mouth. There-

Therefore if you love the LORD much, you will speak much of Him.

FOURTHLY, Love will do and suffer much for the Party beloved. As *St. Paul* was abundant in Love, so was he abundant in Labour likewise; and whosoever aboundeth in Love, will abound in Works also. Therefore see what you do for the LORD *Jesus*; see what you suffer for his Sake. When *Christ* came to *St. Peter*, and asked him that Question, *Lovest thou me?* and *Peter* had appeal'd to Him, that he did; He bids him shew his Love by the Fruit of it, *Feed my Lambs*: And as that was the Work that *Christ* put *Peter* upon for the Trial of his Love, so I may say to every one of you, If you will shew that you love the LORD *Jesus*, do the Works that belong to your particular Place: For every Calling hath a particular Work. If you love the LORD, be diligent in that Calling, which *Christ* hath given you to do Him Service in. It was *Christ's* own Speech, *I have glorified thy Name*; that is, in that Charge thou gavest me to perform: So you must shew your Love to God in doing the Actions of your particular Callings diligently. You know, when that Woman's Heart abounded in Love to *Christ*, it found out a Way to shew itself in breaking the Box of Ointment, and pouring it on his Head.

AND as you will be ready to do much, so you will be ready to suffer much also: These two I put together, because Suffering is a Kind of Doing; it is a Doing of Things, when there is Pain or Difficulty. Now if you love the LORD *Jesus*, see what you will suffer for his Sake; those that we love we are exceeding ready to suffer for. A Husband that loves his Spouse, is exceeding ready and willing to suffer any Displeasure of Parents, or Friends, to suffer

suffer the Loss of his Estate, Discredit in the World, he is ready to break thro' all, and to do any Thing, so he may obtain her Love at the last: So, if you love the LORD *Jesus*, you will suffer any Thing for his Sake. And therefore it was the Commendation of the *Hebrews*, an Argument of their Sincerity, that they *suffered the Spoiling of their Goods with Joy*. Whence came this, but from their Love to the LORD? They were so far from being backward to suffer, that they were glad to have the Opportunity to suffer Somewhat for his Sake.

YOU will say, perhaps, "I am ready to do much for the LORD, and I hope I am not backward to suffer for Him." It is well, if it be so; but let me ask thee, In what Manner dost thou do what thou dost? The Manner of your Doing, is All in All: You must do and suffer, but they must both be done willingly. A Man may do much for the LORD, out of Fear of Hell, and this is little worth. It should all come from the Heart, or it avails not. You may keep the Sabbath, and present yourselves at Prayers and at Sermons; it is well you do so, but yet when *your Hearts are going after Covetousness*, the LORD looks upon this, as upon a formal Performance. It is another Kind of Doing, that the LORD requires at your Hands. It may be you perform Duties in secret, but that is not enough: You may perform them as a Task, and are glad when the Business is done; but when you do it out of Love, you will do it in another Manner, not in this Formality. If you serve the LORD out of Love, it is not the Praying to Him Morning and Evening that will content you, but it is the Working upon your Hearts, 'till you have brought them to a good Frame of Grace: You will never give over 'till your Hearts be quicken'd in Prayer, 'till you have found that GOD hath answered

swered you, 'till you have had Experience of his Mercy and Loving-kindness towards you.

ANOTHER Property of Love is, it is full of Heat: Therefore, in *Cant.* viii. 6. it is compared to *Coals of Juniper*: And from that Phrase used in *Matt.* xxiv. 5. *Iniquity shall abound, and the Love of many shall wax cold*, we learn that Love is hot. Therefore, if you would know, whether you love the LORD *Jesus* or no, consider what Heat and what Fire there is in you.

Now what are the Properties of Fire? Wherein doth Love and that agree?

1. FIRE, you know, is the most active of all Elements. Cold benumbeth a Man, and is the greatest Enemy to Action. If thou love the LORD *Jesus*, thou shalt find thy Love will have that Property of Fire, to set all on Work in thee; it will set thy Tongue on Fire, thy Hands on Fire, thy Head and Heart on Fire; every Thing that is within thee will be working, and doing some Service or other to the LORD. When a Man wanteth Love, he is as a Man benumbed, as a Man frozen, not apt to any Thing; but the more Love, the more Aptness and Readiness he hath to every good Work.

2. FIRE is of a quick Nature, so also is Love. Therefore Love hates nothing so much as Delays. Consider this therefore; Art thou speedy in thy Execution? If thou love the LORD, thou wilt not put off, from Day to Day, any Thing that is to be done: Thou wilt not say with thyself: "I will change my Course of Life, but not yet:" No, if thou love the LORD, thou wilt do it presently.

3. BESIDES, Fire is earnest and vehement; Love is the same. Look what a Man loves, upon that he bestows the Top of all his Affections, and the main Strength of his Intentions run that Way. Examine whether thou love the LORD *Jesus* or no. If thou love Him, thou wilt look upon other Things, as regarding them not; thou wilt grieve for them, *as if thou grievedst not, and rejoice as if thou rejoicedst not; thou wilt use the World as if thou usedst it not;* thy Heart will be taken up about *Christ*, and about the Things that belong to the Kingdom of GOD; thy Intentions will be set upon the Things that belong to the Service of GOD, and thy own Salvation. This is a Thing by which you may plainly discern the Truth of your Love. Examine therefore what it is upon which you bestow the main of your Intentions. If you love the LORD *Jesus*, and be rightly affected towards Him, you will esteem Nothing great, but the Enjoying of his Favour, and Nothing of worse Consequence than the Loss of it; nothing will be of any great Moment to you, but only Sin, and Grace; Sin that displeaseth Him, and Grace that brings you into Favour with Him. As for other Things, you will look upon them as Trifles. You will not put the Strength of your Minds to any Thing else, but Him.

4. FIRE hath also this Property, that it is still enlarging itself, still growing on, turning every Thing into its own Nature; it is overcoming, and it is not ready to be overcome: This is noted, *Cant. viii. 6. Much Water cannot quench it, it is as strong Death:* Now, Death you know overcomes all; so will Love, it will break through all Impediments. Consider, whether you find this Disposition in yourselves, that your Hearts are still drawing nearer and nearer to the LORD, that they are

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still aspiring towards Heaven, that you are still going onward, and thriving in the Work of Grace.

ANOTHER Property of Love is this, it is willing to do all kind Offices, and looks for no Recompence. Love wheresoever it is found, is free in doing that it doth, and examines neither how much we should do, nor how much we shall receive for doing it: So if your Love be right to the LORD, you will not stand considering what you are bound to do of Necessity; whether you are bound to pray in your Families or no, or whether you are bound to keep the Sabbath so exactly as is commanded; whether you are bound from giving so much Liberty to yourselves in vain Speeches; but Love will rather say, What shall I do to recompence the LORD? It will be devising what to do, it will be glad of any Occasion of doing any Thing that may be acceptable to GOD. When you set Limits to yourselves, and are afraid of going too far, and doing too much, it is a Sign what you do cometh not from Love. If then you love the LORD *Jesus* aright, why do you not labour to exceed in the Duties of Obedience? Why do you blame those that go farther than yourselves are willing to go? Why do you quarrell with that Exactness and Strictness which is required in walking in the Ways of GOD? Love is abundant in the Work it doth, and if you love the LORD, you will not limit yourselves, you will not think thus; "I will do as much as will bring me to Heaven, and no more; I will take just so much Pains as that I may not be damned; but I will do no more than needs; this I hope may be spared, and I may go to Heaven well enough notwithstanding." No, if there be Love in you, you will strive to do to the utmost of your Power. Again, you will not be so exact, nor indent with the LORD what He will do

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to you; but though He be slow in rewarding you, though He stay long, and suffer you to go on without taking any Notice of you, as it were; nay perhaps gives you many Afflictions and Persecutions, Poverty, Trouble, or Sickness; though the LORD doth not do what you expect, yet your Love will be free, it will go on; you shall be ready to say as St. Paul did, *I know Whom I have trusted*: That is, He was resolved to serve the LORD, to do his Utmost; though the LORD did reserve Himself and the Recompence of Reward to a farther Time.

AGAIN, you may judge of your Love to the LORD *Jesus* by another Property of Love, which is a Hatred of Sin, examine yourselves by this, for it is a sure Rule, if you love the LORD, you will hate that which is Evil. And here lest you mistake the Being angry at Sin, because perhaps it hath brought you into Trouble and Distress, for Hatred thereof; I will lay before you three Things wherein Hatred differs from Anger, that you may thereby examine yourselves, whether you hate Sin or no.

FIRST, Hatred is more of Generals: If a Man hate Drunkenness, he hates it in all Drunkards. A Man is angry with this or that Particular, but Hatred is of all. I would ask thee, dost thou hate all Sin, all that belongs to Sin? If it be this or that Sin only, you are but *angry* with Sin, you do not hate it: For Hatred falls always upon the General. Examine therefore if you find this Disposition in your Hearts, that you hate every Sin. Whatsoever is contrary to the LORD, do you hate, resist, and strive against that? If so, this is a Sign that you love the LORD, and truly hate Sin.

SECONDLY, Hatred desires the utter Destruction of the Thing it hates, Anger doth not so. Anger desires

desires but a Revenge proportionable to the Injury. Therefore we say there is a Kind of Justice in Anger; it would not have the Party that it is angry with, to be destroyed, but it would have him sensible of its Displeasure; it would have Something done that it might answer the Injury that is offered; but Hatred desires the Destruction of a Thing utterly. Now do you so with your Sins? Do you desire to have them wholly rooted out? to have your Lusts throughly and perfectly mortified? Are you willing to have Sin clean taken away? If so, it is a Sign you hate it indeed.

LASTLY, Hatred differeth from Anger in this, that it is implacable. Anger is a sudden Passion that dies away after a Time; Hatred comes from Judgment: It is a Bent, a Disposition and Frame of the Will that continues. Is your Disposition such to your Sins? Examine yourselves. Nothing is more frequent, than to be angry at some Sin, for the present; but does your Hatred continue? If not, you do but fall out with your Sins, and grow Friends with them again. If you did hate them, as you should, you would never return to Amity with them more. If you thus hate Sin, this is an Argument of your Love to the LORD *Jesus*.

SUFFER me now to try a little farther if you love Him or not. Do you not knowingly grieve Him, and vex Him from Day to Day? If this be your Case, it is certain you love Him not. Some there are that profess much Love to the LORD *Jesus*, but yet spend their Time idly, are diligent in no Calling, but waste their precious Opportunities of doing Good, in doing Nothing that is profitable, either to themselves or others; but eat and drink, and rise up to play. It is the Case of many of our young Gentlemen. A shameful Thing before Men, and

abominable in the Sight of GOD, that Men should live like Beasts, and make their Souls like the Souls of Swine, serving for Nothing but to keep their Bodies from Putrefaction; doing so much the less Work, because they have the more Wages; burying so many precious Talents, (whereof their Time is the chief, because it helpeth to improve all the rest,) of which they shall give an exact Account at that Day, *When GOD shall judge the Secrets of Men's Hearts according to our Gospel.* Do you profess that you love the LORD *Jesus*, and do you neglect Him thus?

As I speak to those that are young, that spend their Time in doing Nothing; so I say the same to those that are of more Years, that waste their Lives in doing Something indeed, but it is not that which they should do; or in doing it in another Manner than they ought; those that are so drowned in Business, that they have no Vacancy to feed their Souls within, to cloath them with Graces. For you must know, my Brethren, that your Souls have Need to be trimmed every Morning, as well as the Body; they have Need of Breakfast, and Dinner, and Exercise, as well as the Body: And as you fail in giving this to the Soul daily, so you shall find it proportionably languish and faint. Do you think that you love the LORD *Jesus* in good Earnest, and yet have scarce Leisure to think of Him from Morning to Night; that you cannot take Time to speak to Him, to seek Him, nor to prepare your Hearts for Him?

BUT, it may be, you will say that your Meaning is good, though you do frequently do amiss, and that you are well affected to *Christ*, and therefore surely you do not hate him. My Brethren, you are deceived in this; your Meaning is not good; for while you cast the Commandments of
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GOD behind you, you cast Him away; and while you lightly and carelessly deny the LORD by your evil Deeds, you cannot mean well. At best it can only be said, You do not mean at all. Try yourselves then; if you love the LORD, you will reverence him. You know, whom we love we reverence, and dare not do any Thing unmeet in their Sight. Take any one whom we love, whose good Opinion we seek for, and we had rather that all the World should see us do an unseemly Thing, than that he should; and certainly if you love the LORD, you would not dare to provoke Him to his Face. Therefore this Carelessness in serving of Him, this Accounting it a light Matter to commit Sin, is a certain Sign of Want of Love to the LORD *Jesus*.

IN the second Place, as you may try your Love by your taking Care not to offend GOD, so you may try it by your Sorrow after you have offended Him. So much Sorrow for Sin, so much Love. And you may take it for a sure Rule; in what Measure any Man desires to please the LORD, in that Measure he will be grieved that he hath displeased Him. Therefore examine thyself: Hast thou sinned against Him many Times, and dost thou look back upon those Sins in a careless Manner? Be sure thou lovest Him not. If a Child, or a Wife commit any Thing against a Father or Husband, and they shall withdraw themselves, and profess themselves displeased, and yet the Child or Wife be never troubled at this, is it not plain, they do not love Him? So likewise your Want of Sorrow for Sin, is a sure Argument that you love not the LORD.

AND yet how many Motives have you to love Him, besides what have already been laid down?

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As first, It is this Love that sets a Price on all that you do. As this Stamp is set on your Actions more or less, so they are more or less acceptable. This was that which set a Price on the Widow's Mite, that will set a Price on a Cup of cold Water: This set a Price upon *Abel's* Offering, and made it more acceptable than his Brother's. The meanest Service when it hath this Stamp on it, is current and good in GOD's Sight, he accepts it; but the greatest Performance without it, is nothing. *If thou give thy Body to be burned, without Love it is nothing,* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

BESIDES this, consider, that if thou love the LORD, thou shalt be no Loser by it. In all other Love a Man seems to be a Loser; for when you bestow your Time, your Pains, your Money, on another, you have so much the less yourself. Hence it is that Men are so backward to love in good Earnest. They love in Shew and in Compliment; that is easy; but to love indeed is difficult, because it takes somewhat from them. But in loving the LORD, it is not so: When you give the LORD your Hearts, He will give you them every Jot again, and reserve not any for Himself. My Meaning is, whatsoever you bestow on the LORD, all the Love that you give to Him, it redounds to your Advantage, you gain by it all: As we see, *Isa. xlviii. 17. I am the LORD that teacheth thee to profit; for if thou keep my Commandments, thy Prosperity shall be as a Flood, and thy Rejoicing as the Waves of the Sea.* As it is said of the Sabbath, so I may say of this Commandment, and all the rest, it was made for Man, and not Man for this; that is, for the Profit of Man, for the Advancement of Man. Thy loving the LORD is for thy Advantage, thou gainest by it: As it is, *Deut. v. 29. Oh, saith He, that there were a Heart in this People to love me, and to fear*

fear me; then it should go well with them, and their Children after them: Not that I might gain, and you lose, but that it might go well with you and your Children forever. Perhaps you think with yourself, "If I love God, I shall lose much Liberty, much Delight." No; though thou seemest to lose this when thou givest thine Heart to the LORD, yet thou gainest all this; the LORD gives thee thy Heart again, and gives thee Leave to dispose of it; He gives thee Leave to love thy Friends, to love thy Wife and Children, as long as thou dost it lawfully; only thou must do it at his Command. Yea, when we give our Hearts to the LORD, He not only gives us them again, but He gives them much better than He received them. As the Heavens return Vapours again that arise out of the Earth, in pure Water, much better than they received them; so if thy Heart, thy impure, thy sinful Heart ascend to the LORD, He will give it thee again much better. As the Earth receives the Seawater, into its Bowels, muddy, salt, and brinish, and after having strained and purified it, returns it in Springs and Fountains, pure, and clean, and fresh: So the LORD doth with us. If thou wouldst give thy Heart's Desire, thy Affections to Him, thou shouldst have all again, only with this Difference, thy Affections should be more pure, thy Thoughts cleans'd, and all the Faculties of thy Soul renew'd. So that take a Man that loves Himself, and that thinks, "Well, say what you will, I will go mine own Ways:" Compare this Man with another, that resolves thus with Himself, "Well, from hence I will deny myself, and give my Heart wholly to the LORD." The Question now is, Which of these are Gainers? I say, the latter hath as much Liberty and as much Power of his own Heart, as much Use of all that is within him, as the other: All the Difference is, the one

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is an unjust Detainer, the LORD hath made the other Steward of his own Heart. So that the LORD hath thy Heart, and yet it is thy own Heart; thou mayest dispose of it as a Steward under thy Master: Thou hast it as before, only now thou disposest of it by his Appointment, before at thine own.

MY Brethren, we must add for Conclusion, that it is not every Kind of Love that the LORD accepts: But, you must love Him *with all your Heart, and with all your Soul*; you know, that this is every where required in the Scriptures: That is, the LORD will have the whole Stream of your Affections, Desires, and Intentions, and your Endeavours to run to Him; there must not any Rivulet run out of it; it must not be drained away, but the whole Stream must be bestowed upon Him; there must be no Division there. The LORD must have all, and there is good Reason, because He bestowed all on you. If the LORD bestow all on you, and you bestow but half on Him, there would be no Equality. You must therefore bestow all on Him, and love Him with all your Heart and with all your Soul, and that makes the Match between you. Now when it is said, *Thou shalt love the LORD with all thy Mind, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul*, the Meaning is; That all that is in a Man, must be set on work to serve the LORD; the Mind to think on Him, to meditate on his glorious Works, to have a right Knowledge of Him; the Memory to remember Him, his Benefits, his Statutes, and his Ordinances: And so the rest of his Faculties.

AGAIN, it is required, that *you love the LORD with all your Might, and with all your Strength*. Now to love the LORD with all our Might, is so to improve

prove all the Means, all the Strength, and all the Ability we have above others, that we may serve the LORD with it more than others. For Instance; A rich and great Man hath more Might than another, can rule and command more than a poor Man can; so he must exceed him in Proportion, in serving the LORD with these Abilities. This it is for a rich Man to love the LORD with all his Might; that is, to love Him so much more than a poor Man, to bestow more on Him, to do more for Him, as his Riches make him more able than the other. For such an one to love Him no more than another, that hath less Might, the LORD will not take this Love; but will deal with him as many Landlords with their Tenants, when they bring less Rent than is due; they will receive none; for they say, So much is due. If thou be a rich Man, if thou be a Magistrate, and hast great Opportunities to serve the LORD, and do but a Little, He will not accept it at all. Thou must love the LORD with all thy Might, for GOD requires this at thy Hands. He saith, *To whom much is given, of him much shall be required*: He saith not, I leave it to him to do more or less, but will exact it according to the Measure he hath received. Therefore consider with thyself, what Power GOD hath put into thy Hands more than others. When you send a Servant to Market, as you put more Money into his Hands, so you expect he should bring home more than another that hath less; so the LORD doth with Men: He sends Men into the World, as Men are sent to Market, He gives a larger Portion to some than to others: To some He gives five Talents, to some Three, to some Two; and expects that they should bring home according to the Price they have in their Hands; that is, according to the Might, according to the Strength and Opportunity He hath given them. For, you must know, That the LORD observes an exact Difference between Man

and Man. It may be, thou livest under better Means than another, thou hast had better Education than another, thou hast more Knowledge in the Ways of GOD than another, the LORD hath helped thee more by the inward Suggestions of his Spirit than another: He therefore looks that thou shouldst bring forth more Fruit than another. And so for all other Abilities and Advantages; the LORD expects at our Hands, that we should love Him with all our Might. It is not that the LORD requires no more, but that thou live soberly, and free from gross Sins: No, GOD does look for more; He requires of every Man according to his Strength and Ability.

HAVING spoken thus much of Faith and Love, it remains that we add Something, touching good Works, the Fruit thereof; for saith the Apostle, when you have to do with *Christ Jesus*, to be ingrafted into Him, to make yourselves first acceptable to GOD through Him, all the Works you do are no more than the Omission of them: *In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision.* But what is of Moment then? Faith (saith he.) But what Faith must that be? Such a Faith as begets Love. And what Love must that be? Such a Love as sets you on Work. So that you have a Chain here consisting of three Links; *Faith*, which when it is right, will beget Love, and *Love*, which when it is right, will shew itself by *Good Works*: *Faith which works by Love.* So the Point we will deliver to you out of these Words, shall be this: *That we are to be judged, not only by our Faith and Love, but also by our Works; that no Man hath Faith and Love, but Works will follow.* This is a very necessary Point, because Men are ready to applaud themselves in their Knowledge in their good Meaning, in their honest Desires

and in the mean Time fail in their Lives and Actions; whereas wherever *Faith* and *Love* are, good Works are never disjoin'd from them. Though it be true, that there are Abundance of good Works where there is no Sincerity, no Pureness within; yet on the other Side, wheresoever there is Sincerity, there are good Works: Tho' many Times the Outside be clean, when the Inside is not, yet the Inside is never clean, but the Outside is clean too. Though it be not a good Rule to say, "I have good Works, therefore my Heart is right;" yet it is a good Rule to say on the other Side, "I want good Works, therefore my Heart is not right."

HERE some Men may object, "But the Will is often taken for the Deed, and if the Will be present tho' the Action do not follow, yet we are accepted." To this I answer, This holds only when there is some Impediment which you cannot remove: As for Example; a Man hath a Desire to do Good to such poor People, but he wants Means to do it: In this Case the LORD accepts the Will for the Deed. And so it is in every Thing else: When you have a Desire, and there cometh some Impediment, that it is not in your Power to remove, then the Will is accepted. Again, Sometimes a Man is ignorant of some Particulars, and he hath a Desire to obey GOD in all Things; here the Will is accepted for the Deed, tho' he be not come to that Degree of Perfection as others.

WELL then, seeing we are to be judged according to our Works, and that a Desire of doing good Works is not accepted in their Stead, but only where the Impediments of them cannot be removed, or a Man is ignorant of what ought to be done, I exhort you to add to your Faith diligent Love;

otherwise it is but a dead Thing, a dead Plant that keepeth the Room idle. If there be true Love in you, shew it by bringing forth the Fruit of good Works. We are called into the LORD's Vineyard for the same Purpose; it is not for you now to stand idle; the Time of your standing still is past; it is for you now to work, for you are now come into the Day. That Exhortation is excellent, *Let us not sleep as do others*, 1 *Thef.* v. 6, 7, 8. Those that are still in the Night, it better beseems them to sleep, and do nothing; but let not us sleep, for we are of the Day. Let it not be with you as with others, to be much in Speech only, but labour to be much in Action. As it was said to *Gideon*, *Up, and be doing, and the LORD shall be with thee*: So I say to every one, *Up, and be doing, and the LORD shall be with you*; that is, tho' perhaps you do not find that Vigour of Spirit, yet be doing notwithstanding; it is the wisest Way; for that Doing will increase the grace within you. Exercise increaseth Health, as well as Health enables to exercise; so the Use of Grace will increase it. Motion causeth Heat, as well as cometh from Heat; so every good Action proceedeth from Grace, and good Actions increase Grace: And therefore be still acting, and judge of yourselves by that; for what else is Grace, what else is that you call Christianity, but to do that which another Man cannot do? Therefore if there be a Difference between you and others, shew it by doing that which another Man cannot do. Therefore if there be such a Difference between you and others, shew it by doing that which another Man cannot do; by exposing yourselves to that Danger, to those Losses for any good Cause, which another would not do; by spending more Time in Prayer, by taking more Pains with your Hearts from Day to Day, by keeping the Sabbath better than others; by being exact in looking
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to your Ways, that you may *be holy in all Manner of Conversation*, that other Men will not do. This is that which will make the World believe, that you are Christians in good Earnest, and not in Shew only: And truly there is no other Way; this Doing is that which makes a Man excellent. You hear Men complain of the Barrenness of their Grounds many Times; we may likewise justly take up the Complaint against the Barrenness of the Lives of Men.

How goodly a Sight it is when a Man looks into the Husbandry, to see the Vine full of Clusters, the Furrows full of Corn, the Trees laden with Fruit? So it is the goodliest Sight we can behold in God's Husbandry, to see Men full of good Works. I beseech you consider it seriously, and now set upon the Doing of it while there is Sand in the Hour-Glass. Your Life will not last long, the Day doth not last always, the Night will come when no Man can work. When a Candle is put out, you may kindle it again; when the Sun is set, it riseth again; but when our Life is past, when the Glass is run, it riseth no more, it is turned no more: *It is appointed to all Men once to die*. If ye might die twice or thrice, it were another Case; but now it is your Wisdom while it is Time, while this short Day lasts, to do what you have to do with your Might, because the Time is short.

THERE is Nothing that is a truer Property of Wisdom, than for a Man to take Hold of Opportunities; nor to lose the Day, nay, not an Hour in the Day; for Time is most precious; it is like Gold, of which every Shred is worth somewhat. It is your Wisdom therefore to be oft sowing Seed to the Spirit. There is none of those good Works, not the least of them but will do you Good in the

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latter End. For, alas! what are your Lives but your Actions? So much as you do, so much you live. Your Lives are short of themselves, why do you make them shorter by doing nothing? For as we have said heretofore, one Man may live more in one Day than another in twenty, because he doth more. You live more as you act more.

BESIDES, what is it a Man serves for in all his Labour under the Sun? What is it he desires but Comfort and Contentment? Now, this consists in doing, in working; for further than there is Working there is no Delight. Therefore it was a wise Saying in that Philosopher, that the Happiness and Comfort that a Man hath in this Life consists not in Abundance of Wealth, in swimming in Delights; but it consists in doing the Actions of a living Man, which is the greatest Comfort you can find here. Do the Exercise and Actions of Holiness, and the more you do, the more Comfort you shall have; for even as Light followeth the Flame, so Contentment followeth Action.

AND what do you live for? Is it not to glorify GOD? You profess so much; and how is it done! Not by your Desires or good Meanings, but by your Actions; those are the Things that Men see and feel, and that glorify your heavenly Father. Let therefore the Light of your good Works shine before Men, for *Herein is my Father glorified, saith Christ, that ye bring forth much Fruit.* The Doing much is that which brings Glory to GOD; the more you do, the more you glorify Him. Again, one great End of your Life, is to do Good to Mankind; but do they fare the better for your good Resolutions? No, they fare the better only for that you do for them and to them. Only your Actions benefit Men.

LASTLY,

LASTLY, for yourselves, What is it that helpeth you, and doth you Good? Only your good Deeds; it is that which furthers your Account. Every good Work that a holy Man doth from the Time of his Regeneration, (for 'till then no Actions are spiritually good) it is put upon his Score, it stands upon his Reckoning, there is nothing lost. The least good Work is not done to no Purpose, but the LORD will repay him the uttermost Farthing. And when will the LORD repay? Not only in the Day of Judgment, (then indeed you shall be paid to the Uttermost) but even in this Life: Mark that too, *You shall have an hundred-fold, here (saith Christ.) They that forsake Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, shall have an hundred-fold in this Life.* Therefore, if there be any Wisdom in the World, this is Wisdom, to be still doing Good, to be much in gracious Actions. Why do you trifle out your Time therefore to no Purpose? *Why sit you idle here?* Why do you not rise up and bestir yourselves? Why do you not fill your Lives with many Actions of Grace? You have good Purposes in you, why do you not stir them up? It is true, indeed we are becalmed many Times, because the Spirit doth not blow upon us; but yet notwithstanding, if we would pray for the Spirit, the LORD would quicken us.

BUT you will say, "Alas! What shall we do? Our Callings give us no Opportunity to do that which other Men's do: If we were Preachers indeed, we should have nothing to mind but the Things that belong to Salvation; and then it would be easy."

MY Brethren, you may find continual Occasion of doing good Actions every Day, whatsoever your Callings are. It is an Error among the *Papists*, to think that Alms-giving, Fasting, and the like,

are the only good Actions. They are exceeding wide of the Matter. Good Actions are nothing else but to do the Will of the LORD, and to bring forth Fruit to his Glory. The Fruit of every Tree in the Orchard is but as the Actions of every Man; and then are the Trees good to the Husbandman, when they are full of Fruit. Every Action that you do in Faith, is that Fruit which GOD looks for; that Fruit is good Works: Therefore, to do the LORD's Will, is to do a good Work. Now by this you may see what a large Field you have for good Works, in what Calling soever you are.

To suffer Imprisonment or Disgrace for good Causes, this is a good Work; for it is a great Work to suffer, and in that you do the Will of the LORD. When a Man lieth upon his Bed, sick of a Consumption or a Fever, that he is not able to stir; to do this with Obedience, to submit then to the Will of the LORD, is a good Work: For as the Bearing of a Burden is a Work, so to bear Sickness and Calamity aright, is a good Work. To think, the LORD hath put me into this Condition; He might have given me Strength to go Abroad, but He hath been pleased to lay Sickness upon me; I say, the right Bearing this Burden is a good Work.

AGAIN, to take Pains with our Hearts, to master our unruly Affections, to get Victory over our Lusts, to tame our unbridled Natures, in all the Variety of Occasions that we pass through, are so many good Works? In Poverty, in Riches, in Honour, and Disgrace, to behave ourselves as becomes Christians; and to carry ourselves patiently and holily through them, is a good Work; and this belongs to every one, though his Calling be never so mean.

WHEN

WHEN *Paul* stood at the Bar, and *Festus* reviled him, the Suffering this patiently, was a good Work in *Paul*. Mark his Manner of Carriage in it, *I am not mad most noble Festus*: There was a Work in that. So I may Instance in the Things wherein you may seem to do the least. The Standing still in some Cases is a Work. The Apostle makes this one of the Chief among the great Works, that are to be done by Christians, *To keep ourselves unspotted of the World*; to pass through all Occasions, and to be never the Worse for them, to go through all Defilements of this Life, and not be tainted: And if this be a Work, how much more is it then to be still doing, to be in Action always? Therefore do not say you want, when you shall always have Occasion enough of that.

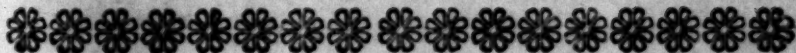
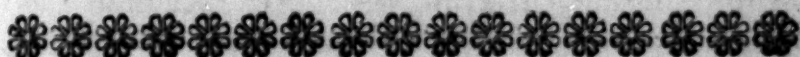
BUT you will say, These general Exhortations are good, but what in particular would you have us do? This especially: *Contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*. Mark it, the Work must be to contend for it: You must be Men of Contention, let the World say what they will of you: It is a Duty that lies on you: It is that which the Spirit calls for from you, that ye be Men that should contend. You must not do it coldly, and remissly, but earnestly strive for it. Let not Pretence of Indiscretion hinder you; for Discretion when it is right, teacheth a Man not to do less but more, and better than another Man. Discretion makes no Man less active, but it gives his Actions a better Tincture. So then say not we must be moderate; for what is that Moderation? The Moderation that keepeth from Excess, is good; but if you mean by Moderation, to go a slow and easy Pace in the Ways of God, that is Coldness, Idleness, Carelessness. It is the *common* Faith, and every Man hath Part in it, and should contend according

cording to his Place and Power (and remember it is a Matter of much Moment) for every Part of the Faith or little Matter thereof, (I speak now of the whole Doctrine of Faith) and should be exceeding exact in keeping of it, that it receive no Detriment.

BUT this is not all-that we would commend to you: There are other Things, and those are, Fasting and Prayer. As in Husbandry, so in the Church, there are certain Seasons of Actions, and those Seasons must not be omitted. The Season for Lifting up your Heart to GOD in Prayer, is always, and in every Thing; for making your more solemn Addressees to Him, whenever Occasion and Opportunity of Place and Time offer; of Fasting join'd with Prayer, when extraordinary Times and Occasions call for it.

AGAIN, there is one Thing more that we will speak of; that is, That every Man for himself often renew his Covenant with GOD concerning the Amendment of his Life; more especially in Times when the LORD hath stretched forth his Hand against a Church or Nation. This is required, that at such a Time they should come and enter into a Covenant with GOD. We have many Examples of it in Scripture. I say the LORD looks for this from every Man in private, that he should in a particular Manner consider, What have I done amiss in my Life? What have I done to provoke the LORD? What Sins of Commission, and what Sins of Omission? Have I been cold and lukewarm? Have I been too conformable to the Times? For this is it that brings Judgment upon a People. The Saints when they are not zealous, when they fall from their *first Love*, may help forward a Judgment as well as gross Sinners, yea, and more too. Let every

very Man therefore stir up himself to do his Duty. In a Word, we should strive and contend for the advancing of *Christ's* Kingdom, for the Furtherance of the Gospel, for the Good of Mankind, for the Flourishing of the Church; and we should do it earnestly: We should contend with GOD in Prayer, contend with our Superiors by Intreaty, with cold and lukewarm Men by stirring them up, by *provoking one another to good Works*. These are the Works that we exhort you to, and thus you shall be assured you have *Faith that works by Love*.



6 JY 64

INT



THE
New COVENANT:
OR, THE
SAINTS PORTION.



GENESIS xvii. 1.

† *I am GOD All-sufficient; walk before Me and be thou perfect: And I will make my Covenant between Me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.*

THESE Words of GOD to *Abraham* contain a Precept of Sincerity, or perfect Walking with GOD, *Walk before Me and be thou perfect*; and also the Motive thereunto, GOD's *All-Sufficiency*, *I am GOD All-sufficient*: As if He should say, if there were any Defect in Me, if thou didst need or couldst desire any Thing that were not to be had in

† In our present Translation, the Words are, *I am the Almighty GOD,*

Me,

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Me, and thou mightest have it elsewhere, perhaps thy Heart might be imperfect in walking towards Me; thou mightest then step out from Me to take in Advantages elsewhere; but seeing *I am All-sufficient*, since I have enough in Me to fulfill all thy Desires, since I am every Way an adequate Object, so that all thy Soul can wish for, thou mayest have in Me, why then shouldst thou not consecrate thyself to Me alone? Why then shouldst thou be uneven in thy Ways, serving Me sometimes, and sometimes the Creature? For there is Nothing in the Creature, but thou mayest find it in Me. *I am All-sufficient*, therefore *walk before Me and be perfect.*

YET these Words contain somewhat more; *I will make my Covenant between Me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.* Here you see the Ground of all our Sincerity and perfect Walking with GOD, which is the Covenant, that is between GOD and us. These Words do the most briefly of any that I find in the Scriptures, express that Covenant on both Sides. Thus saith the LORD unto *Abraham*, on the one Hand; *I will be thy GOD*: On the other; *thou shalt be mine.* Here is the Sum of the Covenant which in other Places of Scripture is set forth more at large.

Now the LORD here shews what a Kind of GOD He will be to him, *I will be All-sufficient* to thee; which consists in two Things, if you compare this with *Gen. xv. 1.* *I will be thy Buckler to preserve thee from all Evil*: And again, *I will be thy exceeding great Reward*: That is, I will not only be a Shield, but will be a Sun to thee; I will both preserve thee from all Evil, and I will fill thee with all good Things. This is the Covenant on GOD's Part. And that which is required on *Abraham's*

ham's Part, is, that he be the LORD's, as the LORD is his; for so you see in the Words following. The Question only is, in what Manner *Abraham* shall be the LORD's; how that shall be declared? Saith he, It is not an empty Relation, but thou must shew that thou art mine by walking before Me. And yet it must not be any Kind of Walking before the LORD, but it must be a *perfect* Walking before Him; *Walk before Me and be perfect.*

THERE are three Points that we will gather out of the Words. I. That *the Cause of all Departure from GOD, of all Unevenness in our Ways towards GOD, is from hence, that we do not think GOD to be All-sufficient.* II. That GOD is *All-sufficient.* III. That *whosoever hath Interest in GOD's All-Sufficiency, must be a perfect Man.*

I. As the Cause of our Sincerity and Perfectness, ariseth hence, that we apprehend GOD to be All-sufficient; (For this Proposition evidently ariseth from the Words; and here lies the Force of the Argument, *I am All-sufficient, therefore walk before Me, and be perfect.*;) So, my Beloved, it is evident, that the Cause of every Man's keeping off from GOD, the Cause of his Unevenness after he is come to Him, is from hence, that Men think not GOD to be All-sufficient: For if a Man had enough in the LORD, he would never go out from Him; but because he wants Something, he desires Something that is not in Him, or he fears Something that he thinks He cannot keep from him: Hence it comes to pass that he steps out from GOD, he goeth out of the Ways of his Commandments.

II. THE second Point is, that GOD is All-Sufficient. And to prove that He is so, I will propound to you but these two Reasons:

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1. CONSIDER that all the Comforts, all the Excellency, all the Beauty that is to be found in the Creature, is but borrowed, and derived: GOD is the Original; He is the first, the universal Cause of all. Hence we gather this, that there is an *All-sufficiency* in Him, and in Him only: So that no Creature hath any Sufficiency at all in itself: For, the Creature adds nothing at all to his Sufficiency, but all Sufficiency is comprehended in Him; for if they be all derived and borrowed Things, then they are in the Creature, but as far as it pleaseth Him to communicate the same to them.

2. HE is *All-sufficient*, because He only can be the Author of Good and Evil. There is no Sufficiency at all in that which can do neither Good nor Evil. Now it is the Property of the LORD; to do both; as we see *Jer. x. 5.* a Place worthy our Consideration: *The Idols stand up as a Palm-tree, but they speak not; they are borne, because they cannot go: Fear them not, because they can do neither Good nor Evil:* This is the Argument, whereby the LORD proveth them to be Idols, because they can do neither Evil nor Good: As if He should say, if they could do either Evil or Good, they were Gods, and not Idols. The same we may apply to any Creature, considered in itself, without the Influence and Concourse of GOD: If it were able to do either Good or Evil, you might worship it as GOD; for GOD only can do Good and Evil of Himself: He only can make every Man's Life, comfortable, or uncomfortable; it is his Prerogative Royal, it belongs to Him alone. There is no Creature in Heaven or Earth, that is able to be the Author of the least Good, or the least Hurt. As there is no Evil in the City, and the LORD hath not done it; neither is there is Good.

BUT

BUT you will say to me, "We find it otherwise in Experience; we find that the Creatures are able to do us Good, and to do us Hurt."

You have an Answer for that, *John xix. 11.* When *Pilate* said to our Saviour, *Have I not Power to crucify thee, or to loose thee?* He answered, No: Thou hast none at all of thyself: Indeed, thou hast a Power, but it is *given thee from Above.* And so it is with all the Creatures we have to do with. Even Men do us not (without GOD's Commission) the least Good, nor the least Hurt. It is said of *Pull* and *Tiglath-pileser*, Kings of *Assyria*, that the LORD stirred them up, and they carried his People away Captive: If GOD had not stirred up their Spirits, they had not done the least Thing. Now if a Man be able to do nothing, but as far as GOD sets him on work, then much less can other Things, as Riches, and the like; they can do no more than Men can do: For what serve they for, but to set Men a Work. So, Honour and Credit, which Men so much esteem, can do no more than Men can do; for they set Men on work to do Good, as Reproach sets them on work to do Hurt. Now if there be no Man, nor Creature in Heaven or Earth, that can do Good or Hurt, why should we be Servants to Men? Why should we be subject to carnal Delights? To carnal Fears? Surely, it is hence; we over-value the Creature; we think it is able to do something; we think that there is some Sufficiency in that, and not *All-sufficiency* in GOD. If any Creature were able to do Good or Hurt without the LORD, if they had any Part or Portion with Him in being Authors of our Good, certainly, they should have a Portion of our Service: For there is Reason and Equity in it, that we should seek unto that which doth us Good, and serve it: And likewise, if it could do us Hurt:

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But now seeing the LORD challengeth all to Himself, saying, *I am All-sufficient*; there is no Creature able to add to me more or less; seeing not the most powerful among Men, no Creature is able alone to do us either Good or Hurt, why should we so-much esteem and over-value it.

THERE are but two Things that we need: One is, Our everlasting Happiness; the other is, The Things of this Life. For the first; the Creature is able to do nothing, it is wholly excluded; for it is inferior to us. Besides, there is a Curse upon the Creature, there is an Emptiness in it: Besides, *it is under the Sun*, and therefore it cannot help to the Happiness that is above the Sun. It is temporal, whereas we must have an eternal Happiness, for our Souls are eternal. So then for the chief Good of Man, the Creature is nothing at all; it helpeth but in Particulars. Credit doth but help against Ignominy; Learning against Ignorance; Health is but a Remedy against Sickness; Riches are but an Help against Poverty: And so you may say of all the Creatures in the World. But the LORD is universally good, He gives all Things; and therefore *Godliness is profitable for all Things*. He gives us all Things to enjoy: that is, He fills the Soul of Man every Way.

AGAIN, for the second Thing we need; that is, The Things that belong to this Life: I confess, the Creature helps us somewhat herein; but it doth it only as an Instrument. Now we thank not the Hand, but the Mind within that moves the Hand to do a good Turn; much less do we thank a dead, inanimate Instrument. Let us look upon every Creature, and every Man as GOD's Instrument. When any Man doth you a Kindness, or doth you Good, say, as the Scripture Phrase is;

The

The LORD hath given me Favour in his Sight. And so, when he doth us Hurt, say, *Such a Man is but a mere Instrument, whereby the LORD has poured out some Part of his Displeasure upon me.* And thus let your Eye be upon the LORD altogether.

BUT now let us consider wherein GOD's *All-sufficiency* towards us consists; and that is in two Things. 1. In keeping us from all Evil. 2. In filling us with all Good.

1. GOD is a *Buckler*, to keep us from all Evil; he is a *Buckler* that compasseth us round about: That Speech is deliver'd upon this Occasion: When *Abraham* had gone to War against those Kings that came out against *Sodom*, the LORD delivered him, and afterwards told him, *Abraham*, as I have dealt with thee at this Time, so fear not when thou fallest into the like Distress; for, *I am thy Buckler*, I will defend thee from all Evil; as I have done from this. Now, He is such a *Buckler*, that no Creature can pierce through; He is such a *Buckler* as covers all over; He is a *Wall of Brass*, and not so only; but He is said to be a *Wall of Fire* about his Children: That is, He is not only a Wall that keeps them safe, but a Wall of Fire to consume all them that come against them: For a Fire, you know, doth not only defend those that are within the Compass of it, but it burns those that come near it: Such a one is GOD to his Children; and that is one Thing wherein his *All-sufficiency* consists.

2. In filling us with all Good; which is expressed in *Pf. lxxxiv.* The LORD will be a Sun and a Shield; he will be a *Shield* to keep off Evil, and a *Sun* to fill them with all Comfort. *I am* (saith he) *thy exceeding great Reward*: As if he should say, *Abraham*, whatsoever is in me, all that I have, all my Attributes are thine, for thy Use; my Power, my

54 *The NEW COVENANT: Or,*

Wisdom, my Goodness, whatsoever is mine in the whole World, I will give it for thy Portion; I and all that I have, are thine. And might He not well say, He was an *exceeding great Reward*? Who can understand the Heighth, and Breadth, and Length, and Depth of this, *I am thy exceeding great Reward*? That is; Thou shalt have all Kind of Comforts in Me, and thou shalt have them in the highest and greatest Measure.

ON the other Hand, there is no Sufficiency at all in the Creature; it can do you, of itself, neither Good nor Hurt, as we told you before. All the Good and Hurt that the Creature can be supposed to do, stands in one of these two Things; 1. Either, in making us happy, or miserable; or else, 2. In affording us subsidiary Helps, such as we have need of. But in neither of them the Creature of itself, is able to do any Thing.

To what we have said before of the Creatures Insufficiency, we will here add, that the Creature is corporeal, the Mind is spiritual; now a Spirit can receive no Happiness from a corporeal Being: Therefore in *Heb. xii. 23.* we are said to go to the *Spirits of perfect Men*, as a suitable Converse for a Spirit. Again, that the Creature is temporary, and not able to run the Course with an immortal Soul to its Journey's End, but leaves it in the middle Way, and therefore is not able to make it happy. Besides, the Creature is finite, and therefore is not able to fill the Soul; GOD is infinite, and therefore is able to do it. That no Creature can do it, we see by continual Experience. Take any Comfort that you find in the Creature, and when you have enjoyed it, still you want somewhat in it that it has not; but when you come to the LORD, and enjoy Him; when your Hearts are filled, still there is some-

somewhat beyond in Him; there is no Stop, no Restraint: And, therefore, He only can make the Soul happy. Now the Ground why GOD is only able to make the Soul happy, is, because the Soul is made for Him; and therefore there is nothing else answerable to it: There is that Constitution of the Mind, that it cannot be filled with any Thing besides GOD. The LORD might have so constituted the Soul of Man, that the Creature might have satisfied it; but He hath not done so: For He made it for Himself, and therefore, Nothing can fill it but Himself. So much for this, that in the Matter of Happiness the Creature is able to do Nothing.

BUT you will say to me; "This is a Thing of which we make no Doubt; but what do you say for ordinary Uses, and for the Vicissitudes of this Life; is not the Creature, in these, able to do Good and Hurt?"

As I said to you before, the Creature is not able, considered without the Influence of the first Mover, to do you the least Good, or Hurt; as the Words are *Jer. x. 5.* speaking of *Idols, that can do neither Good, nor Hurt, and therefore fear them not*: As if he should say; If they could do you either Good, or Hurt, you might fear them. And it is certain, if any Creature were able to do you any Good or Hurt, you might fear it; for GOD alters no Law of Nature: That which is in itself to be feared, we may fear; that which is to be regarded, we may regard it. In Nature and Reason, a Man will have an Eye to the Creature, if it were able to hurt him; and if the Creature could add the least Drop of Happiness, certainly you might have an Eye upon it; but it is wholly from the LORD: Therefore, saith He, "Let your Hearts be only fixed upon Me, let your Eye be only towards Me; let your Affections be taken

56 *The NEW COVENANT: Or,*

taken up about Nothing but Me; spend all the Strength of your Souls in obeying Me, and keeping my Commandments; For, there is None in the World that is able to do you Good or Hurt, but Myself."

Now, to make it appear plain to you, that God only can help, or hurt us, I will propound but these two Things. 1. That all the Creatures are absolutely at his Disposing. 2. That when He hath disposed of and distributed them to us, they cannot actually comfort or hurt us, without a special Hand of his.

1. I SAY, the Creature is fully at his Disposing; it is, as I said before, but God's Instrument. All the Creatures in this World are but as so many Servants, which are in the LORD's House, prepared to wait upon his Children, to convey such Comforts to them, as He hath appointed them; so that there is not one Creature in Heaven or Earth, stirs itself to do you the least Good; but when the LORD commands it, and saith, Go, comfort such a Man; Go, refresh him, do him Good; it stirs not without a Warrant, and without a special Command from Him. The Bread and Meat which you eat, nourish you not, except He say, Go, and nourish such a Man; the Fire warms you not without his Bidding; and so of all the Creatures else. Again, when He doth command them, they do it, and do it fully.

WELL then, seeing all the Goodness that we participate of, both by good and evil Men, is from the LORD; either from his Mercy, or from his Providence; we should learn to sanctify the LORD, both in our Hearts and in our Speeches; not by saying I have gotten such and such Things; but as
Jacob

Jacob said: *The LORD of his Goodness hath given me all this; not Laban, not my own Labour.* If in any Enterprize you have Success, say not, I have done it; but say, as *Abraham's Servant* said; *The LORD hath prospered my Journey:* That is, The LORD doth All in All; it is He that commands all; it is He that disposeth all.

Now, that the Creature is thus guided and disposed by GOD; that it is able to do Nothing without Him, we will not Instance in the Unreasonable Creatures, which you all believe to be at his Command, but in those that seem to be at the greatest Liberty; that is, the Wills and Understandings of Men. But in this, That the LORD guides these, takes his own Testimony, *Prov. xxix. 26. Every Man seeks the Face of the Ruler, but his Judgment is from the LORD:* That is, Men are deceived in this; they think the Ruler, as of Himself, can do Something; because he seems to have much Power to do Good, and Hurt, and therefore they seek his Face; but, he is not able to do any Thing, but what the LORD permits; what He prescribes to him to do, what He saith he shall do, just so far he goes, and no farther; for, the whole Judgment, that a Man hath, is from the LORD: That is, All the Good and Evil that he doth, that Mind of his, from whence it proceedeth, is guided and fashioned by the LORD, upon every particular Occasion.

2. WHEN the LORD hath sent such a Creature to thee, and thou hast it before thee, it is not able to comfort, nor hurt thee, without Him. Put the Case, the Creature be full of Comfort, it is not able to yield that Milk of Comfort that is in it, except the LORD bring it forth, except the LORD apply it in particular to thee. And the same I may say

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say of any hurtful Creature: Be it never so pregnant with Evil; yet, it is not able to exercise it, except the LORD bring it forth, except the LORD use it for such a Purpose: As an Ax, tho' it be never so sharp, yet, if the Workman do not use it to cut such a Tree, to lop such a Branch, it is not able to do it.

Now to apply: If the LORD be *All-sufficient*, we should learn how to guide our Affections. Labour to see that Fulness that is in GOD, and that Emptiness that is in the Creature. If the LORD be thus *All-sufficient*, then let your Hearts be satisfied with Him alone, let them be fill'd with Him, let them be so bottomed upon Him, and so strengthened by Him, that you need not go out from Him to fetch in any Comfort from any Creature whatsoever. We have but a short Time to live in this World; the Strength of our Mind is the most precious Thing; we should then labour to improve the Thoughts and Affections of our Minds, to the Glory of GOD; we should be careful that the Strength of our Spirit be not bestowed upon Things that are unworthy of it. If the LORD be All-sufficient, why should you not bestow it altogether upon him? Why should you spend it upon the Creature? Why should your Mind be occupied about that? Why should you be subject to carnal Griefs, Fears and Desires? Surely, all these should be taken up about the LORD; for He looks for it at our Hands: *I am All-sufficient* (says he) therefore let all these be bestowed upon Me.

THE next Use we are to make of this, that GOD is All-sufficient, is, To be content with Him alone for our Portion. This is of Use both to those *that are Strangers to the Life of GOD*, and likewise to those that are within the *Covenant*.

I. THIS

1. THIS is of Use to those that are Strangers to the Covenant, to bring them in; for the LORD propounds that upon reasonable Conditions. It is true, He requires of you absolute Obedience, that you serve Him altogether; but then withall He propounds to you an absolute and full Ability, *I am All-sufficient*. And as He requires you to leave all for his Sake, so He promiseth that He will be to you in Stead of all Things. All your Desires shall be satisfied, there is Nothing that you need, Nothing that you want, but it shall be supplied.

2. IT will likewise be useful to those that are within the Covenant of Grace: For the Believer will readily allow, that if he hath GOD for his Portion, it is enough; and being perswaded, that He is enough, will be content with Him alone. When the Sun shines to you, tho' there be never a Star, is it not Day? So, tho' you have the LORD alone, and Nothing but Him for your Portion, shall not He be sufficient to make you happy? Is He not All-sufficient, to fill you with Comforts of all Kinds? What then tho' you have Nothing but Him? Again, had you all these Stars to shine to you, if the Sun be set, it is but Night notwithstanding: So you are but in a State of Misery, if you take not the LORD alone for your Portion. Take all the Creatures and you find by Experience, that when they are enjoyed, you see an End of their Perfection; you quickly find a Bottom in them: The Heart hasteth from this Thing, to somewhat else; you now suck all the Honey out of this Flower; and, when you have done so, you go to another, and to another, and no where doth the Soul find Rest. But come to spiritual Things; the more you use them, the more you find the Beauty and Excellency that is in them.

BUT

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BUT, you will say, "There are many Necessities, many Uses, that I have of other Things." Therefore, I will go yet further: Dost thou consider the LORD, what He is? Go through all his Attributes, consider his Almighty Power, consider his great Wisdom, consider his Goodness, Truth and Kindness; all these are thine. My Beloved, GOD is not known in the World; we consider not aright what He saith, when He saith, *I will be thy Portion, I will be thy GOD.* Now to have the LORD Himself, is more than if He should give thee all the Kingdoms of the Earth. Consider this: The Power of GOD is thine, to work all thy Works for thee; to make a Passage for thee, when thou art in a Straight; to bring thy Enterprizes to pass; to deliver thee when thou art in any Affliction, out of which the Creature is not able to deliver thee. Think what it is to have an Interest in GOD's Almighty Power, and think this is one Part of thy Portion: The LORD Himself is thine, and all his Power is thine. Consider likewise his Wisdom: If thou need Counsel in any difficult Case, if thou wouldst be instructed in Things that are obscure, The Wisdom of GOD is thine; thou hast Interest in it; it is thy Portion, thou shalt have the Use of it, as far as He sees it meet for thee. And so the Justice of GOD is thine; to deliver thee when thou art oppressed; to defend thee in thine Innocency, and to vindicate thee from the Injuries of Men. So you may go through the rest of his Attributes, and say within thine Heart; All these are mine. Now, what a Portion is it to have the LORD? If thou hadst Nothing but Him, thou hadst enough.

IF the LORD be All-sufficient, then learn hence, thirdly, to have your Eye only upon Him, when you have any Enterprize to do. If there be any
Cross

Cross, that you would have prevented, if there be any Blessing, that you would obtain, if there be any Affliction, out of which you would have Deliverance, let your Eye be to Him alone, rest on Him alone; for He is All-sufficient, He is able to bring it to pass. Therefore I say, whatsoever thy Case be, look to Him only, and thou needest no other Help. Say thus with thyself, The greatest Means without GOD's Help, are not able to bring this Enterprize to pass, to work such a Work for me, and the weakest with Him is able to do it. You find *Asa* said, LORD, *it is all one with Thee to save with many or with few*, 2. Chron. xiv. 11. And the LORD made it good to him; for when he had but a few, and a great Multitude came against him, you see he was saved with those few: And, afterwards, when *Asa* had a great Multitude, he was not delivered, that he might learn to know the Truth of that which he had spoken before. And therefore in every Business say this with thyself, All my Business now is with GOD in Heaven, and not with Men, nor the Creatures; and therefore if I want Comfort, If I cannot have it from Men, nor from the Creature, yet I know where to fetch it; If I want Wisdom, Counsel, and Advice, or if I want Help, I know whither to go; if the Cistern fail, I can go to the Fountain; I can go to Him, that alone is able to be my Helper in all my Needs, to be my Counsellor in all my Doubts, and to comfort me in all my Distresses. Thus would I press this Thing upon you, to settle your Eyes upon GOD alone.

Now consider whether you are able to comfort yourselves thus out of GOD's All-Sufficiency. We do, for the most Part, as *Hagar* did; when the Bottle was spent, she falls a crying, She was undone, she and her Child should die, and there was

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no more Hope, 'till the LORD opened her Eyes to see a Fountain near her. The Fountain was near her, but she saw it not; when she saw it, she was well enough. Is it not so with us all? Because the Bottle is dried up, because such a Means is taken away, we think presently there is no more Hope, altho the Fountain is near. The LORD himself is the Fountain, and He is near; it needs only that He open our Eyes to see.

AGAIN, if GOD be All-sufficient, let us be exhorted to make a Covenant with Him. If you will enter into Covenant with *Him*, He will be All-sufficient to *you*. Now for your farther Encouragement to enter into Covenant with GOD, that you may thereby experience his All-Sufficiency I shall shew you wherein it consists.

FIRST, GOD is All-sufficient, to justify, and to forgive us our Sins. Secondly, He is All-sufficient, to sanctify us, and to heal our Infirmities. Thirdly, He is All-sufficient, to provide for us whatsoever we need; so that no good Thing shall be wanting to us. These three Parts of the Covenant, we find set down in divers Places; but most clearly in *Ezek. xxxvi. I will pour clean Water upon you, you shall be clean, yea, from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you.* There is the first Part of the Covenant, that He will cleanse us from our Sins; from the Guilt, and Punishment of them. Again, *A new Heart will I give you, also a new Spirit will I put into you, and I will take away your stony Hearts out of your Bodies, and I will give you a Heart of Flesh.* There is the second Part of the Covenant, consisting of Sanctification. And the third is, *You shall dwell in the Land that I gave to your Fathers and I will call for Corn, and I will encrease it, and I will lay no more Famine upon you,*
and

and I will multiply the Fruit of the Tree, and the Increase of the Field, that you bear no more the Reproach of Famine among the Heathen. Here are the Particulars set down; some are named for the rest; I will call for Corn and Wine, that is; for what soever you want. In opening these three Parts of the Covenant, I shall shew you, that GOD is sufficient in all.

FIRST, He is *All-sufficient*, to take away all our Sins. It may be, you will say, "It is an easy Thing to believe this; there is no Difficulty at all in it. But surely, whatsoever we say, we find in Experience it is exceeding hard. Who is able so fully to believe the Forgiveness of his Sins, as he ought, when he is put to it? At the Day of Death, at the Time of Extremity, at that Time when the Conscience stirs up all his Strength, when all a Man's Sins are presented unto him in their Colours, who is able then to believe it? Therefore we had need to find out the *All-sufficiency* of GOD in this: For the Greatness of his Power is shewed in nothing more than in the forgiving of Sins. If you say, "Who doubts that the LORD is able to forgive?" I say, My Beloved, if you did not doubt of it; what is the Reason, seeing you can believe a smaller Sin to be forgiven, that you question GOD's Mercy, when great Sins are committed? Certainly in doubting of GOD's Mercy, Men doubt likewise of his Power, whether He be able to forgive: For as there is a Power in his Wrath; so likewise there is a Power in his Mercy, as we see *Rom. ix. 22, 23* and as GOD shews the Greatness of his Power in executing Wrath upon evil Men; so He shews the exceeding Greatness of his Power, and declares the glorious Riches of his Mercy towards those that turn unto Him, in forgiving their Iniquity, Transgression and Sin; all Kinds and

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Degrees of Sin, whatsoever it be that they have committed against Him.

WHEN a Man considers his Sins, and looks upon them in the Heighth, in the Breadth, and Depth of them, when he sees a Heap of Sins piled up together, reaching up to the Heavens, and down to the Bottom of Hell; then to believe, that the Mercy of GOD is higher than these Sins, and that the Depth of his Mercy is deeper than they; This is to comprehend the Length, and Breadth, and Depth of Mercy in Him, *Ephes. iii. 10.* This is exceeding hard to us; but yet this the LORD is able to do; his Mercy is able to swallow them up; as you find *James ii. 13. Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment.* As if he should say; There is a certain Contention between the Sins that we commit, and the Mercy of GOD: But though our Sins oppose his Mercy, yet his Mercy is greater, and, at length, overcomes them, and rejoiceth against them, as a Man rejoiceth against an Adversary that he hath subdued. Therefore herein we must labour to see GOD's All-sufficiency, that although our Sins be exceeding great, yet the Largeness of his Mercy is able to swallow them up.

THE second Part of the Covenant, is his All-sufficiency in Healing our Sins, or in sanctifying us; when a Man looks upon the Ways of Righteousness, and then upon the Strength of his Lusts, he is ready to say with himself, "How shall I be able to lead a holy Life?" This is the Answer to it; GOD is *All-sufficient*. He that is able to bid Light shine out of Darkness, is able to kindle a Light in thy dark Heart. Though thy Heart be never so averse, He is able to change it, and therefore say not, "I shall never be able to do it: " For He is able to take away all that Reluctancy. For
GOD

GOD doth in the Work of Grace, as He doth in the Work of Nature: He doth not as we do; for when we would have an Arrow go to the Mark, when we throw a Stone upward, we are not able to change the Nature of it, but we put it on by Force. But GOD carries every Thing to their End, by giving them a Nature suitable to that End. An Archer makes an Impression upon an Arrow, but it is a violent Impression; GOD carries every Thing to that End, to which He hath appointed it; but with this Difference, He makes not a violent Impression, but a natural Impression. He causeth the Creature to go on of itself, to this or that Purpose, to this or that End. And so He doth in the Work of Grace; He doth not carry a Man on to the Ways of Righteousness, leaving him in the State of Nature, taking him as he is, but He changeth a Man's Heart, so that he is carried willingly to the Ways of GOD, as the Creature is carried by a natural Instinct to its own Place, or to the Thing it desires. This the LORD out of his All-sufficiency is able to do.

BUT you will be ready to object, "If the LORD be thus All-sufficient, if He be able thus to kindle Light in the dark Heart, to change a Man's crooked and perverse Spirit, to implant such Habits into it, why am I thus? Why am I no more able to overcome my Sins? Why do I come short of the Performance of such Purposes and Desires? Why do I find so many Things in me contrary to the Rules of Sanctification, and to this All-sufficient Power of GOD?"

To this I answer: It may be it is because thou observest not those Rules by which GOD communicates this All-sufficiency, and Power of his. What though the LORD be willing to communi-

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cate it, yet there are some Rules to be observed, which Himself hath given? That is; Thou must diligently attend upon his Ordinances; thou must be careful to abstain from the Occasions He bids thee abstain from: If thou fail in either of these, He hath made thee no Promise to help thee with his All-sufficiency. *Sampson* had great Strength, as long as the LORD was with him. You know, the LORD told him, so long as he nourished his Hair, (which was a Symbol of GOD's Presence) so long He would be with him; but if He had not that, He would withdraw his Presence; and so it is in this Case: The LORD hath appointed us to keep his Ordinances, and so long He will be with us; but if we neglect the Means of Grace, or adventure upon the Occasions of Sin, the LORD is then discharged of his Promise, as we may so say; the LORD then withdraws his Power from us, as He did from *Sampson*. If you will needs touch that Tree, if you will needs go into such a Company, if you will needs gaze upon such Objects: Or, if again, you will neglect Prayer, and Hearing, and Sanctifying the Sabbath, if you will neglect to observe the Rules that He hath appointed; in all these Cases, the LORD withdraws his All-sufficiency. And therefore lay the Fault where it is; that is, Upon yourselves.

GOD hath made a Promise unto those whose Hearts are perfect with Him; but it may be, thy Heart is imperfect, it may be, there hath been Hypocrisy in thy Heart, thou hast never been willing to part with all, to serve Him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind all thy Days. When once thy Heart is brought to Sincerity, doubt not that He will perform that thou lookest for on his Part: For it belongs to his Part to give thee Power,

er, and Strength to do that which thou desirest to do. So much for the second Part of the Covenant.

THE third Part of the Covenant, is to provide for us all good Things belonging to this present Life: Herein the LORD is All-sufficient to all those that are in Covenant with him. I need not say much to make this good unto you. All Things are his, whatsoever a Man needs; Riches are his; they are his Creatures; they come and go at his Command; Honour is his; *I will honour those that honour Me.* He takes it to Himself to bestow it as He pleaseth: Health and Life is his; *the Issues of Life and Death belong to Him:* Friendship is his; for *He puts our Acquaintance far from us,* and draws them near to us. Go through all the Variety of Things that your Heart can desire, and they are all his; He governs and disposes of them as He pleaseth; and therefore, certainly He is able to provide all Things for thee that thy Heart can desire; so that no good Thing shall be wanting to thee.

LABOUR then to see GOD in his Greatness, in all his Attributes, in his Unchangeableness; to see Him in his Eternity, in his Power, in his Providence. See what Use the *Psalmist* makes of the Attributes of GOD: *I said, O my GOD, take me not away in the Midst of my Days! thy Years endure from Generation to Generation; thou hast before Times laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Work of thy Hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure, even they all shall wax old as a Garment.* When a Man sees the Vanity of the Creatures, he looks upon them all, as they that will wax old as a Garment. A Garment that is new at the first, with long Wearing will be spent, and at length be fit for Nothing, but to be cast away;
so,

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so, saith He, shall the whole Body of the Creatures be. Now, when we consider this, That it is a Man's own Case, and every Creature's, let a Man help Himself with this, that GOD remains forever; and therefore, if a Man can dwell with Him, that will help him out of that Weakness, Mutability, and Changeableness that is in the Creature. *LORD, thou art our Habitation from Generation to Generation*, saith the *Psalmist*, *Pf. xc. i.* As if he should say; When a Man dwells with GOD, he hath a safe House; a Castle, that when Generations come and go, when there is a Change of all Things, yet there is no Change in Him. So, when you find these Defects in the Creature, go home to Him, and labour to see his Immutability and Eternity. And so likewise, when thou seeest thy own Inability to do any Thing; when thou seeest that Weakness in the Creature, that it is not able to bring any Enterprize to pass, then look upon his Providence, and his Almighty Power, in that He doth all Things, in guiding the Creature.

THE serious Setting ourselves to consider the Providence of GOD, will discover to us his All-sufficiency, more than any Thing besides. Are not all Creatures made by Him? You will grant that, That every one, even the Smallest, is from Him; Certainly then, there is some End of it; for He made Nothing but for some End; and, if there be an End of it, He must guide it, and lead it to that End; otherwise, He would leave the Building imperfect, He would but begin a Work, and leave it in the Middle; otherwise the Creature would be lost, and perish, and that thro' a Default of his. But there cannot be any Default, any Want of Goodness in Him, the great Builder of all Things, and therefore it must needs be, that He guides every Creature under the Sun: He guides and directs, even the Smallest to their Ends. And this

is all that is meant by Providence: It is nothing else, but to guide, govern, and direct every Creature to their several Ends. Besides, how is it that you see Things fitted one to another as they are? Is it not the Providence of GOD? When you see the Wheels of a Watch fitted one to another, you say this is done by Art, not by Accident; even so it is in Nature; you see a Fitting of one Thing to another in the Body, in the Creatures, in every Thing, in all the Senses; and the setting of one Thing to another shews, that there is an Art that doth it, which is the Providence of GOD. Besides, we see all Things go their Course. Those Things that come by Accident, fall out uncertainly, now one Way, and then another; but, we see all the Works of Nature, go in a certain constant Course. And lastly, if there be no Providence in a Family, it will soon be dissolved: So it is in the great Family of the World; there must be a Government, or it cannot stand; and if there be a Government, it cannot be by Man; and if not by Man, it must be by one that is GOD.

BUT it is objected, "We see many Things are casual, and *that Time and Chance befalls every Thing.*" It is true, there are Chances that fall out in all these Things, that we call Casual, or Accidental, when Something comes between a Cause and the Effect, and hinders it. When a Man is strong, and some Accident comes between and hinders him from obtaining the Battle; when a Man hath Wisdom, and some Accident comes between, and hinders him from obtaining Favour, This is that which we properly call *Chance*. Now it is true, there is such a Chance in the Nature of the Thing; but yet, consider this; tho' this Chance be contrary to the particular Causes, yet it hath a Cause, it riseth from the universal Cause; so that it is call'd Chance, because it thwarts the particular Cause; but it doth not differ from the Intention of the Universal.

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Somewhat there is that is the Author of all Causes; that is the first of all Causes; and therefore it is impossible, that any Thing should be totally by Accident: And therefore, whensoever you find this, it is so far from being casual, so far from coming by Chance, if you look into it exactly, that then the Providence of GOD is most seen. Those Things that are done by particular Causes, according to their Intention, we usually ascribe it to them; but when there is an intercurrent Action comes, that we call Chance, that belongs to the universal Cause, and is to be ascribed to Him; and hence it is, that the LORD usually in the administering of contingent Things, turns Things by accidental Causes; because his own Hand is most seen in it, and He gets the greatest Glory by it. When then you see such an Inability in the Creature, to bring its Enterprizes to pass, labour to see GOD's Almighty Providence, and to be perswaded of it; to think with thyself there is not the least Thing without his Providence; there is not the least Creature that makes a Motion this Way, or that Way, but as it is guided and directed by Him.

ALL the Question is now, how far we practice this: Let every Man examine his own Heart.

FIRST, If a Man believe that All-sufficiency that is in GOD, why doth he terminate his Affections in the Creature? If there be Nothing in the Creature, but Emptiness, why do you love the Creature? Why do you fear it as you do? If there be Nothing in the Creature, but all be in him, we should see through the Creature, we should look beyond it. *Shishack* was but the Vial, thro' which GOD's Wrath was poured upon *Israel*, 2 *Chron.* xii. So *Cyrus* was but the Vial, thro' which GOD's Goodness was poured upon *Israel*, *Ifai.* xlv. If
you

you did look upon every Man, upon every Friend, and every Enemy, upon every Creature, as an Instrument of Good or Hurt to you, as an empty Vial in itself, thro' which God pours either his Goodness or his Wrath, it would cause you not to stick upon the Creature, not to wrangle with Men, or to be angry with them, seeing they are but the Vials: It would cause you again not to be proud of the Friendship of Men, not to be secure in them, not to trust in them, not to think yourselves safe in them, seeing they are but Vials, through which God pours his Mercy upon you. *Use this World then as tho' you used it not.* You would use all the Things in the World, all the Men in the World, as if you did not use them, if you did see an Emptiness in them, and a Fulness and All-sufficiency in God.

MOREOVER, if God be all-sufficient, why do we stick so much upon particular Means, as to say, If such Means are not used, I shall be undone? If He be All-sufficient, it is no Matter what the Means are, He is able to bring it to pass. It is usual with Men to say, If such a Thing fail me, I am undone. What are these but Particulars? This sticking upon Particulars is a Sign we think Him not All-sufficient. If there be not a Spark of Light, but thou walkest in Darkness, and seest Nothing to help thee, if God be All-sufficient, trust in Him. Let him that hath no Light, trust in the LORD. When we lose any particular Means, it is but the Scattering of a Beam, it is but the Breaking of a Bucket, when the Sun and the Fountain is the same. Why should we be troubled at it? When one Means is broken, cannot God find out another? When He said to *Paul*, all the Souls with him should be safe; all were not able to swim to Shore, and the Ship was not able to bring them to Shore; but

but yet, some by broken Boards, some by one Means, and some by another, all got safe: So the LORD brings all Things to pass in a strange Manner, sometimes one Way, sometimes another; He breaks in Pieces many Times the Ship, that, we think, should bring us to Shore, but casts us on such Boards as we did not expect.

AND so likewise, if GOD be All-sufficient, if He be thus exceeding great, consider, if thou see thine own Vileness, thy Ignorance, thy Emptiness. When *Agur* looked upon GOD, and saw his Greatness, *Prov. xxx.* he cries out, that *he had not the Understanding of a Man in him.* Art thou able to say: *I have not the Understanding of a Man in me;* that is, Canst thou see thy Emptiness, and Vanity of thy own Knowledge? Canst thou learn not to murmur against GOD in any of his Ways? Canst thou learn to bring under thy Thoughts to the Ways of GOD's Providence? Canst thou be content to see the LORD going all the Ways that He doth, setting up evil Men, and putting down good Men, causing the Churches to wither, and the Enemies to prosper? Canst thou see all this, and yet *sanctify Him in thine Heart?* Art thou able to say, that *He is holy in all his Ways,* and in this to see the Greatness of GOD, and thy own Folly and Weakness? Canst thou say, that *thou art but Dust and Ashes,* and say it in good Earnest? Then I will believe, that thou hast seen GOD in his Greatness; I will believe, that thou hast seen Him in his All-sufficiency.

MOREOVER, if GOD be All-sufficient, why are we then so ready to knock at other Men's Doors? Why are we so ready to go to the Creature, to seek Help, and Comfort, and Counsel from it, and to knock so little at his Door by Prayer,
and

and Seeking to Him? For, if thou believedst Him to be All-sufficient, thou wouldst be abundant in Prayer, thou wouldst take little Time to look to others, thy chief Business would be to look to Him, not only in praying to Him, but in serving Him, and pleasing Him: We knock at his Door, as well by the Duties of Obedience, as by Prayer, and Seeking to Him. If thou thinkest Him to be All-sufficient, why dost thou not do this?

AGAIN: Lastly, If thou thinkest GOD to be All-sufficient, when thou hast any Service or Duty to do, either belonging to GOD or Man, why dost thou not resolve upon the Doing of it, without looking to the Consequence whatsoever it be? For if He be All-sufficient, then all our Care should be to do our Duty, and to leave the Success to Him. A Servant that thinks his Master is able and willing to provide for him sufficiently at the End of the Day, or Year, or the End of his Service, will be careful to do his Work, without making Provision for himself: And so, if thou believe GOD to be All-sufficient, thou wilt seek no more, but to find out what thy Duty is, how to keep a good Conscience in such a Business, in such a Strait, in such a Difficulty; but when thy Wit is over-running thy Duty, and thou lookest to the Consequence (if I do this and this, this will befall me) that is a Sign thou thinkest not GOD to be All-sufficient, thou thinkest thy Master cannot provide for thee; but thou thinkest I shall be poor, when I have done this Service, and therefore I will provide for myself.

NOT so did *Daniel*: He resolved to do his Duty, and not to go a Step out of the Path: Well; he shall be cast into the Lions Den; yet he keeps his Resolution firm. It was enough for him to do his

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Duty; he left the Consequence to GOD, for he knew He was All-sufficient. So, I say, consider only what thy Duty is upon every Occasion, and never look to the Consequence, either to the Loss of Preferments, of Riches, or Favour: For GOD is All-sufficient; He will order all Things well.

LABOUR then to be perswaded of this Truth, and apply it upon every Occasion. When any Command is presented unto us, when any Thing is to be done, run to this Principle; that shall help thee to do every Duty, that shall preserve thee from every Sin: For Example, GOD hath commanded us to deny ourselves in our Profit, in our Credit, and our Pleasures; and many Times it happens that we are to perform this Duty in particular Cases; consider seriously then, that GOD is All-sufficient; it will make thee do thy Duty thoroughly. What though thou be a Loser in thy Credit; GOD is able to make it up. What tho' thou be a Loser in thy Profit, as *Amaziah* was? Is not He able to give thee Fourscore Talents, saith the Prophet to him? What tho' thou be a Loser in thy Pleasures, that thou lose or want *the Pleasures of Sin for a Season*; is He not able to make it up with *Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*? And again; we are commanded to *take up our daily Cross*, and not to take sinful Courses to avoid Crosses, and Afflictions; and surely, the Way to perform this Duty, is to be perswaded of GOD's All-Sufficiency. Let a Man think then that GOD is able to carry him through; that He is able to keep him in the Time of Sufferings; that it is He that keeps the Keys of the Prison Door; that opens and shuts, when He pleaseth; that it is He that makes whole, and makes sick. *The Issues of Life and Death, belong to Him. Every Man's Judgment, though he seek the Face of the Ruler, yet it is from him:* Then let

let a Man consider, that it is not the Creature that inflicts any Cross or Affliction, but it is GOD that doth it by the Creature, and that will enable him to bear any Cross, to pass through all Variety of Conditions, and not to turn from a strait Way, but to go through the Storm when he meets with it.

III. BUT then observe the third main Point, which was, that *Whosoever hath Interest in GOD's All-Sufficiency, must be a perfect Man*: That is, to take the Word in the lowest Sense, he must be sincere, he must have Integrity of Heart. *I am All-sufficient*, saith GOD, therefore be thou perfect; otherwise thou hast no Interest in this All-Sufficiency of mine. The Point is clear, I shall not need to confirm it by any other Places of Scripture, but rather shew you what this Perfection, and Sincerity of Heart is. The best Way to this, is to open to you those Scriptures, by which it is presented to us.

AND first, you shall find it often expressed by Purity; *blest are the pure in Heart, and GOD is good to Israel, even to them that are of a pure Heart*. Now what is it to be pure? That Heart is pure which is holy, which will mingle with no Sin. It is true, Sin may cleave, and adhere to a Man, as Dross doth to the Silver; but though Sin be there, yet the Heart still casts it out of itself, it resists and rejects it, and cleanseth itself from it. Even Believers have a Fountain of original Corruption in them, and from this Fountain Sins rise continually; but though the Scum arise, still the Heart purifies itself, and casts it out; this is the Property of a pure Heart. With the Impure it is quite contrary; the Scum riseth as in the other, but it is mingled and confounded with all that is in the Heart; there is:

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not such a cleansing Disposition in it, but there is a Mixing of the precious and vile Things together:

SECONDLY, He, whose Heart is *perfect before* GOD, is said to have a *single Eye*. Now that is a *single Eye*, that looks but upon one Object, and that is a single Heart, that looks but upon one Thing. Likewise that is a *double Eye*, and a *double Heart*, that looks upon two Objects, and is divided between two; that stands and looks upon GOD, and upon the World, and knows not well which to choose; sometimes he is following the one, sometimes the other. The Heart of an unsound Man, of one that is not perfect, is not pitched upon GOD alone; but he hath an Eye upon GOD, and an Eye upon Credit; he hath an Eye upon GOD, and an Eye upon Wealth, upon his Pleasures, or whatsoever it is. And in that Regard a Man is said to have *a Heart and a Heart*; not as commonly it is taken, to make a Shew of one Thing, and have another within; but it is *a Heart and a Heart*, when there are two Objects, upon which the Heart is set, so that it is divided between two, and, as it were, cloven asunder. Now then, he is a perfect Man that hath a fix'd Resolution to cleave to GOD alone, that hath his Eye upon Him, and upon nothing besides. This is a single Heart, when a Man shall resolve as *Joshua* did; *As for me and my House, we will serve the LORD.*

A THIRD Expression there is in the Scripture, *Thou shalt serve the LORD thy GOD with all thy Heart*: So that he who has Integrity of Heart, he is a perfect Man; that is, 1. He is a *perfect* Man with GOD, that hath a whole Heart; that is, such a Heart whereof every Part, and Faculty is sanctified;

fied; there is no Part of it, but it is seasoned with Grace; there is no Wheel in all the Soul, but it is turned the right Way; there is not any Thing within him, of which he can say, the Bent of it is another Way. 2. That hath an *Eye to all the Commandments*, there is no Duty but he gives up his Heart to it: And again, there is no Sin, but his Heart is averse from it, and He resists it to the uttermost. You see this Expresssion, *James i. 26. If any Man among you seems to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, this Man's Religion is vain.* Take but this one Instance, that this is the Judgment of the Holy Ghost: Should a Man have an Eye to every Commandment, and should he but fail in this one Thing, not bridling his Tongue, all the rest of his Religion is but vain: Why? Because he hath not an Eye to the whole Law; and if a Man fail in this, he is not a perfect Man. And 3. He is perfect, that moreover hath *Regard to all the Ordinances of God*: For, if he will not use all God's Ordinances conscionably, and in their Season; if he doth not pray, and receive the Sacrament, and use the Communion of Saints, and Fasting, in their Season; and again, if he do not abstain from all Occasions of Sin, he is not a perfect Man.

IN order to know whether you are thus perfect, consider that Property of a *perfect Heart* expressed *Phil. iii. 12. 14. Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after if I may apprehend that, for which I am also apprehended by Jesus Christ. I press to the Mark, for the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus; Let therefore as many as are perfect, be thus minded.* The Meaning is this; this is my Course, saith the Apostle: I have not yet attained to Perfection; but this I do, I aim at the Utmost, even at *the Prize of the high Calling of God in Jesus Christ*: I aim

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even at the Top of Perfection, and *I follow hard to it*: And, saith he, not only I, but *as many as are perfect, let them be thus minded*; where, by the *perfect*, he means, you see, not one that hath already a perfect Holiness, but one that is sound hearted. So you find here these two Properties of a Man, whose Heart is *perfect* with God.

FIRST, He aims at the highest Degree of Holiness; he looks at the very Mark itself; he looks at the Top, at the Standard, at the utmost exact Line of Holiness, and he labours to square himself to it; and though he cannot reach it, yet it is his Endeavour; he propounds not to himself a shorter Journey's End than he should do, but his Aim is even at the very Top of Perfection, at a perfect Conformity to the Image of *Christ*; for that is it the Apostle here speaks of, that *we may be conformable to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. This was his Aim: Whereas, on the other Side, another doth not so; but he sets a certain Compass, a certain Limit to himself; there he fixeth his Staff; he doth not intend to go any further; he doth not intend to *grow up to full Holiness*; he doth not intend to be *holy, as the LORD is holy, in all Manner of Conversation*.

SECONDLY, *He follows hard*; he doth not only make the Mark his Aim, but he follows hard after it; he doth not loiter in the Way; his constant and ordinary Work is, every Day to make his Heart perfect; where he finds any Crookedness, to set it straight again; where he finds any Defect, to supply it; he still amends his Heart, still brings it to a good Temper; that is his Work from Day to Day, to set it right and straight before God in all Things.

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HE serves the LORD with all his Might. A Servant, when he flubbers over his Work, it is an Argument, that he doth it not with his whole Heart, but as with Eye-service; for when he doth it heartily, he doth it painfully, he doth it thoroughly, exactly, and with all his Strength. When a Man doth any Thing truly, and in good Earnest, he doth it always exceeding diligently: Therefore that Expression which you find so often in the Scriptures, *Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD, with all thy Soul, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Strength*, is not an Expression of the Degrees of Love; No, that is not the sole Scope of that Place, but it is an Expression of the Sincerity of a Man's Love; as if he should say, Herein is the Sincerity of a Man's Love, this is an Argument that a Man loves GOD, truly, he loves Him with all his Heart, and with all his Might. It is so in all Things; when you do any Thing for itself, you will do it with all your Might.

WHEN a Man doth a Thing remissly, and perfunctorily, it argues always a divided Intention; it is an Argument that the whole Mind is not set on it; whence that common Saying, *He that will be excellent in every Thing, is so in Nothing*: But whensoever a Man minds one Thing, he will do it with all his Might, because all the Faculties, Thoughts, and Affections of the Soul, are united, and drawn together into one Point, they are still running in one Channel: And therefore a Man that hath a sincere Heart, that chooseth GOD alone, that saith thus with himself; "I have but one Master to serve; I have but one to fear; I have GOD alone to look to; my Business is with Him in Heaven; I think Him to be *All-sufficient*, and an exceeding great Reward," will serve Him with all Diligence: If there be any Work of
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his to be done, he will do it with all his Might. That is the Disposition of a Man's Mind, when once he is able to say as *David* saith, *Psal. xxvii. 4. One Thing have I desired of the LORD, and that will I seek, to see the Beauty of the LORD, to live in his Temple.* One Thing have I desired, and that will I seek with all Diligence. When a Man desires but one Thing, his Mind will be exceeding intent upon it; and therefore you shall find this always to be in those, whose Hearts are upright with GOD, that they give themselves up to his Service; they give themselves up to do it with all Diligence. A Man that saith, I hope my Heart is upright with GOD, and yet is exceeding busy with other Things, doth the Work of GOD negligently: He doth but dissemble, when he saith, that he walks before Him perfectly; for it cannot be. A Man whose Heart is upright, hath this Disposition in him, that his Speeches, his Thoughts, and his Actions, are still busied about Things that belong to the Kingdom of GOD; Holiness is the Element he lives in, he would still be doing something that tends that Way; by his Good-will he would be doing nothing else. Thus he serves the LORD with all his Might, and that is an Argument he hath a sincere Heart.

THUS having shewn you that the Cause of our Departure from GOD is, the Doubting of his All-Sufficiency; and in the second Place, that He is All-sufficient; and again thirdly, that whoever hath Interest in GOD's All-sufficiency, must be a perfect Man; I proceed to shew you, I. What this Covenant is, that GOD makes. II. With whom it is made. And III. How we shall know whether we are in this Covenant, or no.

I. WHAT

I. WHAT *this Covenant is*. You must know, that there is a double Covenant ; 1. A Covenant of Works ; and 2. A Covenant of Grace : The Covenant of Works runs in these Terms, *Do this, and thou shalt live, and I will be thy GOD*. This is the Covenant that was made with *Adam in Paradise*. The Covenant of Grace runs in these Terms, *Thou shalt believe, and take my Son, and accept of the Gift of Righteousness, and I will be thy GOD*. Between these two Covenants you shall find a three-fold Difference, 2 Cor. iii.

1. The first Covenant was a *Ministration of the Letter* ; that is, in the first Covenant there was no more heard or seen, but the naked Commandment ; there went with it no Aptness, no Disposition to keep it ; they heard what the Law was, they saw what GOD required, but there was no more ; and those that were Declarers of it, were but the *Ministers of the Letter, and not of the Spirit*. 2. This Covenant brings only a servile Fear, and Enmity ; for when a Man looks upon the Author of this Covenant, and hears no more but the Law, and what it requires, he looks upon GOD as a hard Master ; Again, he looks upon his Law as a heavy Yoke, as an unsupportable Bondage, and therefore he hates it, and wishes there were no such Law ; he runs from it, as a Bondslave runs from his Master, as far as it is in his Power. This is that which is said, Gal. iv. 24. *Hagar gendreth to Bondage* ; that is, the Covenant of Works begets Bondmen and Slaves, not Sons and Freemen. - 3. *It is a Ministration of Death* ; that is, it propounds a Curse to all those that do not keep it, and it shews no Means to avoid it ; and therefore a Man is affected to it, and to GOD the Author of it, as one is to an Enemy that seeks his Destruction. This ariseth not from hence, that the Law of GOD is a cruel

cruel Law (for the Law is good); but it ariseth from the Weakness of the Flesh: As for Example, If you would take a Potter's Vessel, and dash it against a firm Wall, the Reason why the Wall is the Destruction of the Vessel, is not any Infirmary or Weakness in the Wall; but it is the Weakness and Brittleness of the Vessel: And so in this Case, the Reason why this Law, or Covenant of Works, is a Ministration of Death and Enmity, is not because there is any Imperfection in the Law, but it is from the Weakness of the Flesh that is not able to keep the Law.

Now, on the other Side, the Covenant of Grace is, 1. *A Ministration of the Spirit, and not of the Letter.* 2. *A Ministration of Love, not of Enmity; of Freedom, not of Bondage.* 3. *A Ministration of Life and Justification, and not a Ministration of Death and Condemnation.*

WHEN a Man hath looked upon the Covenant of Works, and sees Death in it; sees a strict Law that he is not able to keep; then comes the Covenant of Grace, and shews to him a Righteousness that himself never wrought, to satisfy this Law; shews him a Way of obtaining Pardon for the Sins he hath committed against this Law, by the Death and Satisfaction of another. When he sees this, he sees withall the Mercy of God, giving this to him; and when he sees this, his Opinion, his Disposition, and Affection is alter'd; he looks not on God now as upon a hard Master, but as a God exceeding full of Mercy and Compassion; whence this follows, that his Heart melts towards the LORD, and he comes and serves Him with Cheerfulness. He looks not now upon the Law of God as an Enemy, or as Bondage, but as a wholesome and pro-

profitable Rule of Direction, that He is willing to keep for his own Comfort.

Now, when the Heart of a Man is thus soften'd, then the Spirit of GOD is sent into his Heart, and writes the Law of GOD in his inward Parts. And look what there is in the outward Law, as it is written and laid before you, there shall be a Disposition put into the Heart, that shall answer it in all Things; there shall be a Writing within, answerable to the Writing without; that, even as you see in Sealing, when you have put the Seal upon the Wax, and taken it away again, you find in the Wax the same Impression, Stamp answering to Stamp, Character to Character, Print to Print: So it is in the Hearts of the Faithful, after they are once soften'd; the Spirit of GOD *writes the Law in their Hearts*, so that there is a Law within, answerable to the Law without; an inward Aptness, answering every Particular of the Law; an inward Disposition, whereby a Man is inclined to keep the Law in all Points. And it is not only put into the Mind, as Habits are, but it is so ingrafted as a natural Disposition is; it is so rooted in the Heart, so rivetted in, as when Letters are ingraven in Marble.

Now you must observe, That it is *Christ* that thus writes the Law of GOD in the Heart of Man, which He doth ordinarily by Means of the Minister, (who is, as it were, the Pen) thro' the Power of the *Holy Ghost*, (which is, as it were, the Ink:) For the Means are not left to themselves, but the LORD must concur with them immediately. The Ministers are but *Co-workers with Him*; He holds their Hands, as it were, when they write the Epistle in any Man's Heart; it is He that guides the Pen,

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Pen, it is He that puts Ink into it, and therefore the Epistle is his.

YOU now see the Difference between the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Works. Now this Covenant of Grace, is Two-fold; it is either the Old Testament, or the New: They both agree in Substance, but they differ in the Manner of the Administration, in the following Points:

1. THE New Testament, or the New Covenant, is larger than the Old; it extends to the *Gentiles*, whereas the first was confined to the *Jews*.
2. The Old was expressed in Types, Shadows, and Figures: As for Example; they had the Blood of Bulls and Goats, they had the Washings of the Body in clean Water, they had Offerings of Incense, and the like; by which Types other Things are meant; as, namely, The Death of *Christ*, and the Satisfaction He gave to his Father by his Death, the inward Sanctification of the Spirit, and the Works and Prayers of the Saints, sweet as Incense; whereas now in the Time of the Gospel, these Things are taught us plainly; so that the Old and New Testament differ, as the Image and Substance; the one was expressed but in Types and Shadows, the other hath the Substance itself.
3. The Old Testament in itself is but weak and unprofitable; *For the Law made Nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better Hope makes perfect*, by which we draw near to GOD; that is, This was able to do Nothing, further than it led to that which was effectual; therefore it waxed old, and vanished away; but the Second proved effectual to take away Sin, and to sanctify us, and therefore it is an everlasting Covenant.
4. They differ in the Confirmation: The New Testament was confirmed by an Oath, and by the Blood of the Testator, *Christ*; whereas

whereas the other was confirmed by the Blood of Goats; and accordingly the New Testament hath new Seals put to it, *Baptism, and the LORD's Supper*, when the Old had only *Circumcision, and the Passover*. 5. In the New Testament there is a more clear Knowledge of Things, than in the Old; as we see, *Heb. viii. 10, 11. After those Days, saith the LORD, I will put my Laws into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts: And I will be to them a GOD, and they shall be to Me a People. And they shall not teach every Man his Neighbour, and every one his Brother, saying: Know the LORD: For all shall know Me, from the Least to the Greatest*: That is, they shall know much more; and that which they do know, they shall know in another Manner: They shall know it more distinctly, more particularly. Moreover, as the Knowledge is greater, so the Promises are better. The Main of the Promises made in the Old Testament, (tho' the Promise of Salvation was not excluded) were, That they should have the Land of *Canaan*, and outward Prosperity; the New Testament meddles little with them; but with Promises of Salvation, Remission of Sins, and Sanctification by the Spirit. And again, there is a larger Effusion of the Spirit under the New, than there was under the Old Testament; the Spirit is now pour'd on us in a greater Measure. Then it was distilled by Drops; now the LORD hath dispensed it in a greater Abundance to the Sons of Men. In the Time of the Gospel, there is greater Measure of Grace, and it follows upon the other; *Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ*; that is, because there was more Truth, and more Knowledge, there went likewise more Grace with it. There is a greater Revelation; so likewise there goes more Grace. That is a sure Rule, that all saving Knowledge taught by GOD, carries Grace proportionably

with it. 6. The last Difference is in the Mediator; *Moses*, a Man like us, was the Mediator of the Old Testament; that is, it was He that declared it, it was He that executed it; but we have a *High-Priest that hath obtained a more excellent Office, in as much as He is the Mediator of a better Testament.* *Christ* is the Mediator of the New Covenant; it is He that declares the Covenant; and it is He that hath reconciled the disagreeing Parties; He hath gone between them, as it were, and hath undertaken for both Sides: He hath undertaken on God's Part, these and these Things shall be done; and He hath undertaken on our Part, to give Satisfaction by his Death, and likewise to make us obedient to his Father.

You have heard what the Covenant is in general: I shall now shew you what are the particular Branches, or Parts of it; and they are three, answerable to the three Offices of *Christ*. *Christ* you know is a Priest, a King, and a Prophet; it is He that makes good all the Parts of the Covenant, and He doth it according to all his three Offices; 1. As a Priest He gives us Remission of Sins; 2. As a Prophet He gives us Knowledge; and 3. As a King He governs and defends us. Of the Priestly Office I shall say no more here; Of the other two somewhat more largely.

As a Prophet, **CHRIST** teacheth us Knowledge. You shall no more teach every Man his Brother, but all shall be taught of Me, saith the **LORD**. It is another Kind of Teaching, when the **LORD** teacheth us Knowledge, than that we can have from Men. He is such a Prophet, as baptizeth you with the Holy Ghost; such a Prophet as makes Mens Hearts burn within them when He speaks to them; such a Prophet as saith to *Mat-*
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threw, *Follow me*, and he doth it; such a Prophet as saith to his Ministers, *Go teach all Nations, and I will be with you*, and I will make you *able Ministers, not of the Letter, but of the Spirit*. This is the Prophet that the LORD hath raised up; the Prophet that He promised He would *raise like Moses*, that should teach Men after another Fashion, than all the Prophets before were ever able to do. And that is the second Part of the Covenant.

WE may know many Things, but it is a hard Thing to know as we ought to know. Thou mayst know Sin, and know it most exactly, but, if this do not work upon thy Heart; if the Sin lie not exceeding heavy upon thee; if it breed not in thee godly Sorrow for it; if it doth not amaze thee, as it were, with the Filthiness and Vileness of it; it is because thou dost not yet know it, as thou oughtest to know. And how shall a Man do then? Go to *Christ*; He is the Prophet, He teacheth a Man to see Things so, that his Heart, his Will and Affections shall be moved with it. You are to consider the Covenant when you go to the LORD, and remember this is a Part of the Covenant to teach Men, and GOD hath bound Himself by an Oath to perform it. GOD hath sent his Son *Jesus Christ* to teach thee all Things belonging to Salvation; and so to teach thee, that thou shalt be in a right Manner affected with it.

AND so likewise if thou know GOD, thou seeest Him in his Attributes; thou hearest Him often described; and art able to describe Him to others; but for all this, thou findest not thy Heart affected towards Him; thou seeest not that Excellency and Beauty that is in Him, so that thy Heart is not enamoured with Him; thou canst not say thou lovest Him *with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with*

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all thy Strength: What wilt thou do in this Case? Go to *Christ* the Prophet, and beseech Him that He would teach thee to know the LORD. This is his Promise; if thou pray to Him, and He do not do it, urge Him with this; it is Part of his Covenant, that He hath confirmed by Oath, and must do it: And be assured of this, if we seek, and be earnest with Him, He will teach us to know the LORD; and to know Him so, that we shall love Him with all our Soul, and with all our Strength. The like may I say of any Thing else. Thus much for the second Part of the Covenant.

As to the third Part of it, or that which *Christ* will perform to us, as He is a King, it consists in these three Things:

1. To rule us. If thou find thyself subject to unruly Affections, which thou canst not master, it is a Part of his Kingdom to set up his own Government in thy Heart, *to put his Law into thy Mind*, and to write it in thy inward Parts, that so thou mayest be indeed subject to the Kingdom of *Christ*. When a Man sees nothing but the outward Letter of the Law, he will never yield Obedience; but *Christ* comes as a King, and puts an inward Disposition into the Mind, that shall answer the Letter without, and so He makes a Man subject to his Government. For Example; this is the Law without, *Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength*; to answer which, you shall see, *Deut. xxx. vi. I will circumcise thy Heart, and thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength*: That is, I will put this Affection, or this Grace of Love within thy Heart; there shall not be a Law without only, but there shall be a Grace within; a Habit

bit of Love, answerable to the Commandment without. And when this Government is set up, and the Law is put into our Mind, then He makes us Kings: For when Men have so much Strength within themselves, that they can rule themselves, and walk in the Way of Righteousness, they are then made Kings; and such Kings the LORD makes all those that come to Him.

2. To keep his People in Peace. This the LORD doth likewise, and this is a Part of his Kingdom. His Kingdom is spiritual; and therefore the main Work of it is to give us inward Peace and Joy. You may have Troubles in the World; it is the ordinary Portion of the Children of GOD: We are therefore not so much to expect outward Peace; but GOD promiseth inward Peace and Joy: When you want it, ask for it; it is a Part of GOD's Covenant to give it. You may go to GOD, and beseech Him to fill your Hearts with this *Peace that passeth Understanding*, and with this *Joy which is unspeakable*. Go, and beseech Him to enrich your Hearts with those Riches that belong to Salvation; and He will do it.

3. To give us Victory over our Enemies. This is the third Part of *Christ's* Kingly Office; and that which was promised to *Abraham*, when he renewed his Covenant, upon the Offering of his Son; *Thou shalt possess the Gates of thine Enemies*. This is the great Promise that GOD hath made to us, *that being delivered from the Hands of all our Enemies, we might serve Him in Righteousness and Holiness all the Days of our Life*. Luke i. 74. You may challenge this Covenant at his Hands: When you are to wrestle with *Satan*, or any Temptation, say, "LORD, hast Thou not said, that Thou wilt deliver me out of the Hands of all mine Enemies? Is it not

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a Part of thy Covenant?" But that is not all neither; there is a Promise (and that is Part of the Covenant likewise) that we shall overcome our outward Enemies, so far as it is good for us, so far as GOD sees it meet; and therefore a Man may go and challenge it at GOD's Hands thus; "LORD, " if it be good, if it be fit for me to have it, thou " hast promised it, I shall have Victory over them " also."

So you see what the Covenant is: But there is one main Branch of this Covenant, that is general to all the three; that is, the Giving of the Spirit. This Pouring out of the Spirit upon us, is that which comprehends the Life of all the other three; that which enables us to do all the rest; that which makes us Kings, and Priests, and Prophets; even as *Christ* Himself was anointed with the Spirit without Measure, that He might be a Prophet, a King, and a Priest.

II. OUR next Business is to shew you, with whom this Covenant is made, and that is with all those who are perfect in the Manner above described. For it was not made with *Abraham* only, but with him and his Seed after him: Therefore it is with the perfect, with the faithful Race; for *they which are of Faith, the same are the Children of Abraham*, Gal. iii. 7. And *they which are of Faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*, Ver. 9.

My Beloved, it is a Thing that is not sufficiently considered of us, how great a Mercy it is, that GOD should be willing to enter into Covenant; that He should be willing to make Himself a Debtor to us. He is in Heaven, and we are on Earth; He the glorious GOD, we Dust and Ashes; He the Creator, and we but Creatures; and yet he

he is willing to enter into a Covenant with us. This should teach us to magnify the Mercy of GOD, and to be ready to say, as *David* did, What am I, or what is my Father's House, that I should be raised hitherto; that I should enter into Covenant with the great GOD; that He should come to a Compact and Agreement with me; that He should tie Himself, and bind Himself to become a Debtor to me? It is not a small Thing to enter into Covenant with GOD, to be in Covenant with the King of Kings. When there was a Covenant between *Jehoshaphat* and *Ahab*, *Jehoshaphat* said, *There is a League between us; therefore my Horses are as thy Horses, and my People as thy People*: And so it is between GOD and us; when there is a Covenant between us, then his Strength is our Strength, and his Armies are our Armies, we have Interest in all. This great Benefit you have; therefore you have Cause, whoever is within the Covenant, to bless the LORD, to magnify Him for his great Goodness, that he would enter into Covenant with you.

BUT here consider what is the Condition of this Covenant of Grace on Man's Part: That is only Faith. And if you ask why Faith is the only Condition of this Covenant? I answer:

I. BECAUSE Faith brings with it Sanctification, and Holiness of Life. It draws with it all other Graces, after this Manner: He that believes GOD, loves Him; he that loves Him, must needs be full of good Works. Besides, he that believes Him, when GOD shall say to him, "*I am thy exceeding great Reward*", see that thou keep close to Me, have an Eye upon Me, and walk with Me from Day to Day," will be ready to do it. When GOD called *Abraham* from his Father's House, and from his Kindred,

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dred, he was ready to leave them; when God would have him offer up his only Son, he was ready to do it; whatsoever God bid him do, he would do it; he preferred God before his own Ease, before his own Profit, before his only Son whom he loved. Let any Man believe as *Abraham* did, and of Necessity it will produce good Works. Let a Man believe truly, and Truth of Belief will bring forth Truth of Holiness. Hear what *St. James* saith, *Jam. ii.* *Abraham was justified by Faith*, it is true; but *Abraham's* Faith had Works joined with it; for it was not a dead, a counterfeit Faith, but a true Faith; and being a true Faith, *Abraham* had Works as well as Faith. So then Faith is the Condition of the Covenant, because it is the Ground of Perfection and upright Walking with God.

2. BECAUSE Nothing else can answer the Covenant but Faith. The Covenant is not a Commandment, but a Promise. *I will give thee*: It runs all upon Promises, *I will give thee a Seed, and in that Seed thou shalt be blessed. I will give thee this good Land*, and so on. So that the Covenant of Grace stands on God's Part all in Promises. Now you know it is Faith that answers the Promise; for the Promise is to be believed. If the Covenant had stood in Precepts and Commandments, then it must have been answered by Works and Obedience; but since the Covenant consists of Promises, it must needs be by believing and not by Works.

PERHAPS it may be asked here, But how is this Covenant confirmed? For when a Man hears that God will vouchsafe so much Favour unto Mankind, he might be ready to object, Alas! what are the Sons of Men, that the great God of Heaven and Earth should enter into such a Covenant with

us; that He should make us such Promises; that He should make us Heirs of the World; that He should bless us so as to make us his Sons, so as to make us Prophets, Kings and Priests? I confess it is a Covenant that needs Confirmation; therefore the LORD hath confirmed it; first, by his Promise; saith He, You have my sure Word for it; if that be not enough, I will confirm it by an Oath: And because He had no greater to swear by, He saith, *By Myself have I sworn*, that I will make it good: And lest this be not enough, He confirms it by the Blood of *Christ* Himself; by the Death of the Testator; and if this be not enough, He hath added unto it Sacramental Seals and hath confirmed it likewise by them: He hath given unto us the Seals of Baptism and the LORD's Supper, as He gave unto them of old *the Seal of Circumcision*, and of the Passover.

III. THE last Thing I proposed to shew you, was this, How a Man should know whether he be within the Covenant, or no? The Scripture saith *Abraham* believed GOD, and therefore GOD reckoned him as a Man that was righteous, and accepted him to be a Partaker of the Covenant: And so, if thou believe in the LORD *Jesus Christ*, it is certain thou art within the Covenant of Grace; thou art by that Faith put into it; for that is the only Condition thereof, as was before observed.

Now whosoever, truly believeth in *Christ* is engrafted into Him; and whosoever is in *Christ*, hath received the Spirit of *Christ*; and if a Man have not received the Spirit of *Christ*, he is not in Him. Therefore that you may know whether you have the Spirit, I will commend these two Places of Scripture to you: One is, *Rom. viii. 15. You have not received the Spirit of Bondage again unto Fear,*
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but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby you cry, Abba Father; the same Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirits, that we are the Sons of GOD: The other, 1 John v. 8. There are Three that bear Record in Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, and these Three agree in one.

I. THE Spirit of Bondage of Necessity must go before; so that if thou never hadst the Spirit of Bondage, certainly thou never hadst the Spirit of the Son: For the Apostle speaks of it here, as the common Condition to all Christians, they do not receive the Spirit of Bondage again; you had it once, but now you have the Spirit of Adoption: I say, every Man must have this Spirit of Bondage; because no Man can come to *Christ*, except the Law be a Schoolmaster to bring him to *Christ*. Now the Law is not a Schoolmaster; it teacheth no Man, except the Spirit of Bondage work Fear, and put an Edge upon it. You may hear the Law and the Threatnings and Curses applied to you ten thousand Times over, and yet no Fear be bred in you, except the Spirit of Bondage join with it, and make it effectual.

THO' the Spirit of Bondage is not just alike in all; it is sometimes more, sometimes less, but all have it more or less; sometimes the Medicine is not so much discerned; but GOD means to bestow upon some Men a great Measure of Grace, and therefore He gives them a greater Measure of the Spirit of Bondage; because GOD means to teach them more to prize *Christ*, He means more to baptize them with the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, therefore He baptizeth them with a greater Measure of the Spirit of Bondage; they shall drink deeper of that Spirit, because his Intention is, they shall drink deeper of the Spirit of Adoption.

THE

THE Things which go with it, are these Three; the Testimony of the *Blood*, of the *Water*, and of our *own Spirits*. First, there is the Testimony of the *Blood*. When the Spirit of Bondage makes a Man fear, it empties a Man of all Righteousness, as a Man empties a Cask, that there is Nothing left in it; it pulls away all other Props and Stays from him; it leaves a Man in this Case, that he sees Nothing in the World to save him, but the *Blood of Christ*: When a Man sees this, he takes fast Hold of that; he will not let it go for any Thing; and tho' it be told him, You shall have many Troubles and Crosses; you must part with all that you have; he cares not tho' it costs him his Life; if he may have this *Blood* to wash away his Sins, it is enough; this he lays fast Hold upon. And when a Man doth this, at that very Hour he is entred into Covenant; he is translated from Death to Life. When a Man can say, "I know I have taken and applied the *Blood of Christ*; I rest upon it; I believe that my Sins are forgiven; I grasp it; I receive it," this is the Testimony of the *Blood*.

But the LORD comes not by *Blood* only, but by *Water* also; that is, by Sanctification; He sends the Spirit of Sanctification, that cleanseth and washeth his Servants; that washeth away, not only the outward Filthiness, but the evil Nature. He washeth every Man in the Church from Top to Toe. There is not one Place in the Soul, not one Place in the Conversation, but it is rinsed in this *Water*: And then when a Man comes to find this, that he hath been able to purify himself, and, by the Work of *Christ's* Spirit joining with him, to cleanse his Conscience from dead Works; this is the second Testimony.

Now

Now follows the Testimony of our own Spirits, which gathers Conclusions from both these, and saith thus: "Seeing I have received the Blood, and seeing I am able to purify myself, I conclude, I am Partaker of the Covenant:" Tho' a Man could argue thus truly; "*Whosoever believes, shall be saved*, but I believe," This is the Testimony of the Blood only: But when a Man can say, "I purify myself; I desire Nothing in the World so much; I do it in good Earnest," This is the Testimony of the Water to the Sign and Testimony of the Blood; which shews that it is true, that it is a lively Hope.

BUT some Men say, This Testimony of a Man's own Spirit may deceive him. I answer, it cannot; because though it be called the Testimony of our own Spirit, yet it is a Spirit enlightned; it is a Spirit sanctified with the Spirit of *Christ*.

BUT above all these is the Testimony God's Spirit. When a Man hath put to his Seal that God is true, then the LORD seals him again with the Spirit of Promise; that is, the LORD sends the Spirit into his Heart, and assures him, that He hath received him to Mercy. You will say, "What is the Witness of the Spirit?" It is a Thing that we cannot express. It is a certain divine Expression of Light, a certain unexpressible Assurance, that we are the Sons of GOD; a certain secret Manifestation, that GOD hath received us, and put away our Sins;" I say, it is such a Thing, that no Man knows, but they that have it. Beloved, this is the Testimony of the Spirit. I confess, it is a wondrous Thing, and if there were not some Christians that did feel it, and know it, you might believe there were no such Thing; that it were but a Fancy or *Enthusiasm*: But it is certain, there are a Ge-

a Generation of Men, that know what this Witness of the LORD is. Indeed you must remember this, to distinguish it from all Delusions, This Spirit comes with the Water, and the Blood; and therefore if any Man have Flashes of Light and Joy, that witness he is in the Covenant, and for all this, hath not the Things that go before it, he may well take it for a Delusion: So likewise if he have not the Consequence of it, which is, the Spirit of Prayer. So I will conclude all; he that hath the Witness of the Spirit, is able to cry *Abba Father*. If thou have an Assurance of a good State, and yet art not able to pray, thou art deceived; for that is the Property of the Spirit, it makes a Man cry to GOD, and call Him Father.

You will say, "Is that such a Matter? Every Man can pray." Beloved, The Spirit of Prayer is another Thing than the World imagines it to be; he that hath this Spirit, is mighty in Prayer; he is able to wrestle with GOD, as *Jacob* did: By the Spirit of Adoption, he *had Power with GOD*; he is able to prevail with the LORD; and why? Because He can speak to Him, as to a Father; he can *continue in Prayer, and watch thereunto with all Perseverance*; he can speak to Him, as one that he is well acquainted with; he can, not only speak remissly, but he can cry *Abba Father*; that is, he can pray with Fervency; and there is no Man in the World, that is able to do it besides.

The End of Dr. PRESTON'S WORKS.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

WORKS

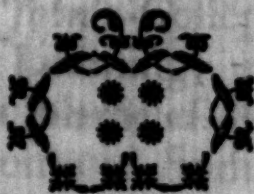
OF

RICHARD SIBS, *D.D.*

MASTER of KATHERINE-HALL, in
CAMBRIDGE;

AND

Sometime Preacher of GRAY's-INN.



To which is prefix'd,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

WORKS

LIFE

RICHARD SIBS, D.D.

MASTER OF KATHERINE-HALL, IN
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AND

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L I F E
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Dr. RICHARD SIBS.

RICHARD SIBS, was born upon the Borders of *Suffolk*, near *Sudbury*, and being trained up at School, when he was grown ready for the University, was sent to *Cambridge*, in 1595, and was admitted into *St. John's-College*; where he so profited in Learning, and approved himself by his blameless Conversation, that he was promoted from one Degree to another in the College; being chosen first Scholar, and then Fellow of that House. He also took all the Degrees of the University, with general Approbation and Applause. It pleased GOD to con-

The Life of Dr. SIBS.

vert him by the Ministry of Mr. *Paul Baines*, whilst he was Lecturer at St. *Andrew's*, in *Cambridge*. And when Mr. *Sibs* had been Master of Arts some While, he enter'd into the Ministry, and shortly after was chosen Lecturer himself at *Trinity Church*, in *Cambridge*: To whose Ministry, besides the Townsmen, many Scholars resorted, so that he became a worthy Instrument of begetting Sons and Daughters unto GOD; as also of edifying and building up of others.

ABOUT the Year 1625, or 1626, he was chosen Master of *Katherine-Hall* in *Cambridge*, in the Government whereof he continued 'till his Dying-day; and like a faithful Governor, he was always very careful to procure and advance the Good of that little House. For he procured good Means and Maintenance by his Interest in many worthy Persons, for the Enlargement of the College; and was a Means, of establishing learn'd and religious Fellows there; insomuch that in his Time, it prov'd a very famous Society for Piety and Learning, both as to Fellows and Scholars.

BUT

The Life of Dr. SIBS.

BUT before this, about the Year 1618, he was chosen Preacher at *Gray's-Inn*; where his Ministry found such general Approbation and Acceptance, that besides the learned Lawyers of the House, many noble Personages, and many of the Gentry and Citizens resorted to hear him, and many had Reason to bless God for the Benefit, which they received by him,

HIS Learning was mixed with much Humility, whereby he was always ready to undervalue his own Labours; though others judged them to breathe Spirit and Life, to be strong of Heaven, speaking with Authority and Power to Men's Consciences. His Care in the Course of his Ministry was to lay a good Foundation in the Heads and Hearts of his Hearers. And tho' he was a wise Master-Builder, and that in one of the most eminent Auditories for Learning and Piety, that was in the Land; yet, according to the Grace which was given to him (which was indeed like that of *Elisha*, in Regard of the other Prophets, the elder Brother's Privilege, a double Portion) he was still taking all Occasions to preach of the Fundamentals to them, and amongst the
Rest,

The Life of Dr. SIBS.

Rest, of the Incarnation of the Son of God: And Preaching at several Times, and by Occasion of so many several Texts of Scripture concerning this Subject, there is scarce any one of those incomparable Benefits, which accrue to us thereby, nor any of those holy Impressions, which the Meditation hereof ought to work in our Hearts, which was not by him sweetly unfolded.

INDEED he was thoroughly studied in the Holy Scriptures, which made him a Man of GOD, *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good Work*; and as became a faithful Steward of the manifold Graces of GOD, he endeavoured to teach others the whole Counsel of GOD, and to store them with the Knowledge of GOD's Will, in all Wisdom, and spiritual Understanding.

HE was a Man that enjoyed much Communion with GOD, *walking in all the Laws of GOD blameless*; and, like *John the Baptist*, was a *burning and shining Light*, wasting and spending himself to enlighten others. He was upon all Occasions very charitable, drawing forth

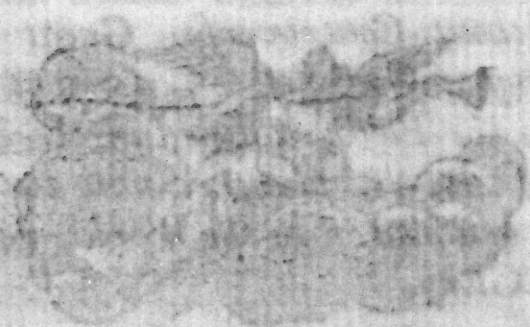
The Life of Dr. SIBS.

forth not only his Purse in relieving, but his very Bowels in commiserating, the Wants and Necessities of the poor Members of *Christ*. He used sometimes in the Summer-time, to go abroad to the Houses of some worthy Personages, where he was an Instrument of much Good; not only by his private Labours, but by his prudent Counsel and Advice, that upon every Occasion he was ready to minister unto them. And thus having done his Work on Earth, he went to receive his Wages in Heaven, peaceably and comfortably resigning up his Spirit unto God, in the Year 1635, and in the 58th Year of his Age.



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The Life of Dr. S. A. ...
 ...not only his ...
 ...his very bowels in ...
 ...Waste and Necessities of the poor Men-
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 ...Year of his Age.



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THE
FOUNTAIN Open'd;

OR, THE
MYSTERY of GODLINESS
REVEALED.

I TIMOTHY iii. 16.

*And without Controversy, Great is the
Mystery of Godliness: GOD was mani-
fest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit,
seen of Angels, preached unto the Gen-
tiles, believed on in the World, received
up to Glory.*

THERE are two Things that GOD values
more than all the World besides; the Church,
and the Truth; The Church, that is, the *Pillar and
Ground of Truth*, as it is in the foregoing Verse: The
Truth of Religion, that is, the Seed of the Church.
Now,

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Now the blessed Apostle *S. Paul*, being to furnish his Scholar, *Timothy*, to the ministerial Office, doth it from two Grounds especially; 1. From the Dignity of the Church, which he was to instruct and converse in; and, 2. From the Excellency of the Mysteries of the Gospel, that saving Truth: Hereupon he doth seriously exhort *Timothy* to take Heed how he conversed in the Church of GOD, in teaching the Truth of GOD.

THE Church of GOD, is the House of GOD, a Company of People that GOD cares for, more than for all Mankind besides; for whom the World stands, for whom all Things are; *It is the Church of the Living GOD, the Pillar and Ground of Truth.* And for the Truth of GOD, that must be taught in this Church, that is so excellent a Thing, that we see the blessed Apostle here useth lofty Expressions concerning it. As the Matter is high and great, so the Apostle hath Expressions suitable. A full Heart breeds full Expressions. As no Man went beyond *S. Paul*, in the deep Sense of his own Unworthiness, and of his State by Nature; so there was no Man reached higher in large and rich Thoughts, and Expressions of the Excellency of *Christ*, and the good Things we have by Him: As we see here, in setting forth the Excellency of the ministerial Calling. Being to deal with GOD's Truth towards GOD's People, He sets forth evangelical Truth gloriously; *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness; GOD was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up to Glory.*

IN these Words there is a Preface, and then a particular Explication; there is the Fountain, and the Streams issuing from it; the Root, and the Branches;

Branches; there is, as it were, a Porch to this great House. Great Buildings have fair Entrances; so this glorious Description of the Mysteries of the Gospel, hath this fair Porch, and Entry to it: *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness.*

THEN the Fabrick itself is parcelled out in these six Particulars:

*GOD manifest in the Flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen of Angels,
Preached unto the Gentiles,
Believed on in the World,
Received up to Glory.*

FIRST, for the Preface; whereby the Apostle makes Way to raise up the Spirit of *Timothy* (and in him us) unto a reverent and holy Attending to the blessed Mysteries that follow: *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness.*

IN this Preface, there is observable, 1. The Thing itself, *Godliness.* 2. The Description of it, it is a *Mystery.* 3. That it is a *great Mystery.* 4. That it is so *without all Controversy.* There are none that ever felt the Power of *Godliness*, but they have confessed it to be a *great Mystery.*

To observe Somewhat from each of these, I shall begin with

Godliness.

GODLINESS, is either the Principles of the Christian Religion, or the inward Disposition of the Soul towards them; the inward holy Affection of the Soul; the Word implyeth both: For *Godliness*

is not only the naked Principles of Religion, but likewise the Christian Affection; the inward Bent of the Soul, suitable to Divine Principles; a godly Disposition, carrying us to godly Truths.

To prove that Godliness includes the Truths themselves, I need go no further than the Connexion: In the last Words of the former Verse, *The Church is called the Pillar and Ground of Truth*; and then it follows, *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery* (he doth not say of Truth, but) *of Godliness*; instead of Truth, he saith Godliness.

THE same Word implies the Truths themselves, and the Disposition of the Soul towards them; to shew that both must always go together. Wheresoever Christian Truth is known, as it should be, there is a supernatural Light: It is not only a godly Truth in itself, but it is embraced with godly Affections. These blessed Truths of the Gospel require and breed a godly Disposition; the End of them is Godliness; they frame the Soul to it.

HENCE we may fetch a Rule of discerning when we are godly, or what makes a true Christian. When a Man nakedly believes the Grounds of Divine Truth, the Articles of the Faith, doth that make him a true Christian? No; but when these Truths breed, and work Godliness: For, Religion is a *Truth according to Godliness*, not according to *Speculation* only, and *Notion*. Wheresoever these fundamental Truths are embraced, there is Godliness with them. A Man cannot embrace Religion in Truth, but he must be godly. A Man knows no more of *Christ*, and divine Things, than he values, esteems and affects them, and brings the whole inward Man into a Frame, to be like them. If these Things work not Godliness, a Man hath
but

but a human Knowledge of divine Things; if they carry not the Soul to trust in GOD, to hope in GOD, to fear GOD, to love Him, and to obey Him; that Man is not a true Christian.

RELIGIOUS, Evangelical Truth, is Wisdom; and Wisdom is a Knowledge of Things directing to Practice. A Man is a wise Man, when he knows so as to practise what he knows. The Gospel is a divine Wisdom, teaching Practice as well as Knowledge. Therefore, he that is godly believeth aright, and practiseth aright. He that believes ill, can never live well; for he hath no Foundation: And he that lives ill, tho' he believe well, shall be damned. Therefore a Christian hath godly Principles out of the Gospel, and a godly Carriage suitable to those Principles. And indeed, there is a Force in the Principles of Godliness (from GOD's Love in *Christ*) to stir up to Godliness. The Soul that apprehends GOD's Truth aright, cannot but be godly. Can a Man know GOD's Love in *Christ* incarnate, and *Christ*'s Suffering for us, and his Sitting at the Right Hand of GOD for us, the infinite Love of GOD in *Christ*, and not be carried in Affection back to GOD again, in Love, Joy, and true Affiance? It cannot be. Therefore, it is not a cold, naked Apprehension, but a spiritual Knowledge, when the Soul is stirred up to a suitable Disposition, and Carriage, that makes Godliness. Now this Godliness is

A Mystery.

THE Word signifies a hidden Thing; it comes from the *Greek* Word, *Múw*, which means, to shut or stop the Mouth from divulging. The Heathen had their Mysteries among them in their Temples, which they must not discover; therefore there was an Image before the Temple with his Finger be-

110 *The FOUNTAIN Open'd: Or,*

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fore his Mouth, shewing that they must be silent in the Discovery of hidden Mysteries: But the Gospel is called a Mystery, not so much that it is secret, but that it was so, before it was revealed.

IN the second Place, that is called a Mystery in the Scripture, the Reasons of which are hid. So the Calling of the *Jews* is called a Mystery, tho' the Thing be revealed; yet, that GOD should be so wondrous merciful to them; that is the Mystery. When we cannot search into the Depth of a Thing, tho' the Thing it self be discovered, that is a Mystery.

IN the third Place, a Mystery in Scripture is taken for a Truth hid under some outward Thing. Marriage is a Mystery, because it conveys the hidden spiritual Marriage between *Christ* and his Church. The Sacraments are Mysteries; because in the one, under Bread and Wine, there are conveyed to us the Benefits of *Christ's* Body broken, and his Blood shed; and in the other, under Water, a visible outward Thing, there is signified an inward Cleansing.

IN a Word, the whole Christian Religion is nothing but a continued Mystery, a Chaining together of Mystery upon Mystery. And the particular Branches are called Mysteries; as the Union between *Christ* and the Church is so called. But the whole Gospel is here meant; as *Christ* saith, *Mark* iv. *The Mysteries of the Kingdom of GOD*; that is, the Description of the Gospel. For what is the Gospel? The Mystery of GOD's Kingdom, of *Christ's* Kingdom; a Mystery, discovering how *Christ* reigns in his Church; and a Mystery of bringing us to that heavenly Kingdom. So then,
the

The Mystery of Godliness reveal'd. 113

the whole evangelical Truth is a Mystery, and that for these Reasons :

FIRST, It is a Mystery, because it was hid from all Men, 'till GOD brought it out of his own Bosom : First, to *Adam* in *Paradise*, after the Fall, afterward to the *Jews*, and in *Christ's* Time, more fully to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. It was hid in the Breast of GOD ; it was not a Thing framed by Angels or Men. After Man was fallen to that cursed State, this Design of Saving Man by *Christ*, came not into the Head of any Creature. The Thought of satisfying Justice by infinite Mercy ; of sending *Christ* to die, that Justice might be no Loser, could arise in no other Breast but GOD's. *Christ* brought it out of the Bosom of his Father ; *No Man hath seen GOD at any Time* ; *Christ the only begotten Son, in the Bosom of the Father*, He discovers the Father, and his Meaning to Mankind. Who ever could have thought of such a Depth of Mercy unto fallen Man, when GOD promised the *blessed Seed*, *Gen. iii.* if GOD Himself had not discovered it ? Therefore, this reconciling of Justice and Mercy is a Mystery of heavenly Wisdom.

AGAIN : It is a Mystery, because when it was revealed, it was revealed but to few : It was revealed at first only to the *Jews*, it was wrapped in Ceremonies, and Types, and in general Promises, to them ; it was quite hid from most Part of the World.

AGAIN : When *Christ* came, and it was discovered to the *Gentiles*, yet it is a Mystery even in the Church, to carnal Men, that hear the Gospel, and do not understand it ; that have the Vail over their Hearts : It is *hid to them that perish*, though it be never so open of itself to those that believe.

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IN the fourth Place, it is a Mystery, because tho' we see some Part of it, yet we see not the whole Gospel; we see not all, nor wholly; *We see but in Part, and know but in Part*: So it is a Mystery, in Regard of the full Accomplishment.

YEA, and in the next Place it is a Mystery, in Regard of what we do not now, but shall hereafter know. How do we know divine Truths now? In the Mirror of the Word, and Sacraments. We know not *Christ* by Sight; that Manner of Knowledge is reserved for Heaven. Here, we know only, as it were, in a Kind of Mystery; we see divine Things wrapped up in the Mirror of the Word, and the Mysteries of the Sacraments. Indeed, this comparatively to the *Jewish Church*, is to *see the Face of GOD in Christ*; a clear Sight: but compared to that we shall have, it is to see in a Glass, or Mirror: If we look back, it is a clear Sight; if we look forward, it is a Sight as it were in a Mystery: Even that little that we do know, we do not know it, as we shall know it in Heaven.

BUT is the Doctrine of the Gospel itself only a Mystery? No: All the Graces are Mysteries, every Grace.

THERE is a Mystery in Faith. Is it not a Mystery, that the earthly Soul of Man should be carried above itself, to believe supernatural Truths, and to depend upon that he sees not? That a Man should be as a Rock, to stand unmoveable in the Midst of a Storm, is a Mystery: That the Soul should be turned universally another Way; that the Judgment and Affections should be turned backward; that he that was proud before, should now be humble; that he that was ambitious before, should now despise the World; that he that was given to his Lusts

The Mystery of Godliness reveal'd. 115

Lusts and Vanities before, should now be serious, and heavenly minded; is a Mystery indeed.

IT was a Riddle to *Nicodemus* (as wise as he was) when our blessed Saviour spake to him of the New-Birth, that a Man should be wholly changed, and new-moulded; that a Man should be the same and not the same; the same Man for Soul and Body, yet not the same, in Regard of a supernatural Life put into him, carrying him another Way, leading him in another Manner, by other Rules, as much different from other Men, as a Man differs from a Beast. A strange Mystery, that raiseth a Man above other Men, as much as another Man is above other Creatures. For a Man to be content with his Condition, in all Changes and Varieties; to have a Mind immoveable when he is cast and tossed up and down in the World, is a Mystery: Therefore *S. Paul* saith, *Philip. iv. 12, I have entered into Religion* (as it were) *I have consecrated myself*, (the Word is wondrous significant:) *I have learned this Mystery to be content. I can want, and I can abound, I can do all through Christ that strengtheneth me*: Therefore the Apostle in the Text, teaches that not only divine Truths are a Mystery, *Great is the Mystery of Godliness*; but he insists on particular Graces; *Preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the World*: These are Mysteries.

IN *Christ* all is Mystery; two Natures, God and Man, in one Person; mortal and immortal; Greatness and Baseness; Infiniteness and Finiteness, in one Person.

THE Church itself is a mystical Thing: For under Baseness, under the Scorn of the World, what is hid? A glorious People. What is the Church?
A Com-

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A Company of Men that are in the World, without Glory, without Comeliness and Beauty; yet notwithstanding they have Life in the Root. *Our Life is hid with Christ in God, Colos. iii. 3.* The Church hath a Life, but it is a hidden Life; a Life under Death. They seem to die to the World, but they are alive: This is excellently followed by *S. Paul; As dying, and yet we live; as poor, yet making many rich. 2. Cor. vi. 10.* A strange Kind of People; poor and rich; living and dying; glorious and base; yet this is the State of the Church in this World: They are an excellent People, but they are veiled under Infirmities of their own, and the Disgraces and Persecutions of the World. So we see both the Doctrine itself, and the Graces of the Gospel, and the Head of the Church, and the Church itself are Nothing but Mysteries.

Is it so, that Religion is a Mystery? Then first of all, do not wonder that it is not known in the World; and that it is not only not known, but persecuted, and hated. Alas! it is a hidden Thing; Men know not the Excellency of it. As great Mens Sons, in a foreign Country, find not Entertainment answerable to their Worth; so these Divine Truths find little Acceptance in the World, because they are Mysteries; not only Mysteries in the Tenet, but in the Practice; therefore the Practice finds such Opposition in the World: *Father, forgive them, saith our blessed Saviour, they know not what they do.* The World knows not what they do, when they persecute Religion, and religious Persons. The Church is a mystical Thing, and Religion is a Mystery; it is hid from them.

AGAIN, if it be a Mystery, then it should teach us to carry ourselves suitable to it. Even the Heathens carried

carried themselves reverently in their Mysteries. Let us carry ourselves reverently toward the Truth of GOD; towards all Truths, though they be never so contrary to our Reason; though they are Mysteries altogether above Nature. There are some Seeds of the Law in Nature, but there are no Seeds of the Gospel in Nature; therefore we should come to it with a great Deal of Reverence. *S. Paul* teacheth us an excellent Lesson, *Rom. xi. 33.* When he entred into a Depth that he could not fathom, doth he cavil at it? No: He cries, *Oh, the Depth! Oh, the Depth!* So in all the Truths of GOD, when we cannot comprehend them, let us with Silence reverence them, and say with him, *Oh, the Depth!* Divine Things are Mysteries, the Sacraments are Mysteries; let us carry ourselves towards them with Reverence.

THOSE that come with common Affections, and common Carriage, to holy Things, prophane them. We prophane the Sacrament, if we take the Bread and Wine as a common Feast: As *S. Paul* saith; *You discern not the LORD's Body, 1 Cor. xi. 29.* We prophane Mysteries, when we discern not. Beasts and beast-like Men discern not the Relation of Things; that these outward Elements have Reference to great Matters, to the *Body and Blood of Christ*: They do not discern them from common Bread and Wine, though they be used to raise up our Souls to the *Bread of Life*. So likewise, when we come to the Word of GOD, and *look not to our Feet*, but come to the Church, as if we went to some common Place, without Prayer, without Preparation, this is to come prophanelly. When we come to converse with GOD, we must not come with common Affections; we must carry ourselves holily, in holy Business, or else we offer to GOD *strange Fire*. It is a Shame for us in religious Duties, not
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to labour to bring suitable Dispositions. It is a Matter of that Consequence, that Life and Death depends upon it. You know what *S. Paul* saith, *1 Cor. xi. 30. For this very Cause, some are sick and weak, and some sleep, some die: Why? For coming with common Affections, for not discerning the LORD's Body, for not examining ourselves, for not having answerable Dispositions to the Greatness of the Mysteries we go about.*

AGAIN, are these Things *Mysteries, great Mysteries?* Let us bless GOD, that hath revealed them; for the glorious Gospel. Oh! how doth *S. Paul*, in every Epistle, stir up People to be thankful for these Mysteries? What Cause have the *Gentiles*, that were in the *Shadow of Death* before, to be thankful to GOD? What Kind of Nation were we in *Julius Caesar's* Time? As barbarous as the *West Indians*: The *Canibals* were as good as we. We that were so before; not only to be civilized by the Gospel, but to have the Means of Salvation discovered; what Cause have we to be enlarged to Thankfulness? And shall we shew our Thankfulness, in provoking his Majesty? There is nothing in the World that is a Ground of such Thankfulness as the glorious Gospel; that brings such glorious Things as it doth. Are there not Thousands that sit in *Darkness*? The *Romish Church*, is it not under the *Mystery of Iniquity*? And that we should have the glorious Mysteries of the Gospel revealed to us; that the Vail should be taken off, and we should see the Face of GOD in *Christ*; what a Matter of Thankfulness is it to all that ever felt Comfort by it?

AGAIN, it is a Mystery: Therefore it should teach us likewise, not to think to search into it merely by Strength of Wit, and Study of Books, and all human Helps that can be: It must be un-

vailed by GOD Himself, by his Spirit. If we set upon this Mystery only with Wits and Parts of our own, then what our Wits cannot pierce into, we shall judge not to be true; as if our Wits were the Measure of Divine Truth: With us, so much as we conceive, is true; and so much as we cannot conceive, is not true. What a Pride is this in Worms of the Earth, that will make their own Apprehensions, the Measure of Divine Truth? We must not struggle with the Difficulties of Religion with our natural Parts.

It is a Mystery: Now therefore it must have a double Vail took off; a Vail from the Thing, and the Vail from our Eyes. It is a Mystery, in Regard of the Things themselves, and in Regard of us. It is not sufficient, that the Things be light-some that are revealed by the Gospel, but there must be that taken from our Hearts, that hinders our Sight. The Sun is a most glorious Creature, but what is that to a blind Man, that hath Scales on his Eyes? So Divine Truth is glorious, it is Light in itself, but there are Scales on the Eyes of the Soul; there is a Vail over the Heart, as *S. Paul* saith of the *Jews*; therefore they could not see the Scope of *Moses*, directing all to *Christ*. Naturally, there is a Vail over Mens Hearts, and that is the Reason, that though they have never so many Parts, and the Things be light in themselves, yet they cannot see: Therefore, the Vail must be taken both from the Things, and from our Hearts, that Light being shed into light-some Hearts, both may close together.

AGAIN, being a Mystery, it cannot be raised out of the Principles of Nature; it cannot be raised from Reason. But perhaps some may ask, "Hath Reason no Use in the Gospel?" Yes; sanctified Reason hath, to draw sanctified Conclusions from

sanctified Principles: Thus far Reason is of Use in these Mysteries, to shew, that they are not opposite to Reason: They are above Reason, but they are not contrary to it; even as the Light of the Sun is above the Light of the Candle, but it is not contrary to it. The same Thing may be both the Object of Faith, and of Reason. The Immortality of the Soul is a Matter of Faith; and it is well proved by the Light of Reason. And it is a delightful Thing to the Soul, in Things that Reason can conceive of, to have a double Light; for the more Light, the more Comfort.

REASON should stoop to Faith in Things that are altogether above its Reach; as to conceive *Christ* in the Womb of a Virgin, the Joining of two Natures in one, the Trinity of Persons in one Divine Nature, and such like: Here it is the greatest Reason to submit Reason to Faith; to yield to God, that hath revealed these Mysteries. Is not here the greatest Reason in the World to believe Him that is Truth itself? Therefore this is one Use of Reason in the Mystery of Godliness, to stop the Mouths of Gain-sayers; to shew that it is no unreasonable Thing, to believe what God hath revealed.

AGAIN, Seeing it is a Mystery, let no Man despair. It is not the Pregnancy of the Scholar here, that carries the Point; it is the Excellency of the Teacher. If GOD's Spirit be the Teacher, it is no Matter how dull the Scholar is. Pride in great Parts, is a greater Hinderance, than Simplicity in meaner Parts: Therefore *Christ* glorifies GOD, that He had revealed *these Things to the Simple*, and concealed them from the Proud. Let no despair; for the Statutes of GOD *give Understanding to the Simple*, Psal. xix. 7. GOD is such an excellent Teacher, that where He finds no Wit, He

He can cause it. He hath a Privilege above other Teachers; He doth not only teach the Thing, but He gives Understanding to apprehend it.

It is a Mystery: Therefore take Heed of slighting Divine Truths. The empty shallow Heads of the World make great Matters of Trifles, and stand amazed at Baubles and Vanities; and think it a Grace to slight Divine Things. This great Mystery of Godliness they despise. That which the Angels themselves stand amaz'd at, and are Students in, that the Wits of the World slight and despise, or dally withal, as if it were a Matter not worth reckoning. But I leave such to Reformation, or to GOD's just Judgment, that hath given them up to such Extremity of Madness and Folly. Let us labour to set a high Price on the Mysteries of Godliness.

LET us now consider, How we shall come to know this Mystery as we ought, and to carry ourselves answerable.

I. WE must desire GOD to open our Eyes; that as the Light hath shined, so we may discern it. Though the Mystery be now revealed by Preaching, Books, and other Helps; yet to see this Mystery, and make a right Use of it, there is required a spiritual Light, to join with this outward Light. And hence comes a Necessity of depending upon GOD's Spirit. There must be an Using of all Helps and Means, or else we tempt GOD. We must read and hear, and above all, we must pray. This was *David's* Manner; as you see, *Psal. cxix. 18. Open mine Eyes, O LORD, that I may see Wonders in thy Law*: As if he had said; There are Wonders in thy Law, but my Eyes must be open'd to see them. He had Sight before, but he

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desires still a further and clearer Sight. As the poor Man in the Gospel, when he was asked, *What wouldst thou have?* cry'd after Christ, LORD, *that my Eyes might be open'd:* So should every one of us (considering it is such a ravishing Mystery) cry after GOD, and Christ; LORD, *that my Eyes might be opened, that I may see the Wonders in thy Law; that I may see the Wonders in thy Gospel, the unsearchable Riches of Christ.*

Now the Spirit doth not only teach the Truths of the Gospel, but the Application of those Truths, that they are ours; this Truth of the Gospel is mine, the Sacrament Seals it to *me*. The Preaching of the Word takes away the Vail from the Things, and the Spirit takes away the Vail from our Souls. It is the Office of the Spirit, to take the Vail off the Heart, and to lighten our Understandings, and likewise to be a Spirit of Application to us in particular. Therefore, saith the Apostle, *He hath given us the Spirit, to know the Things that are given us of GOD,* in particular. So the Spirit doth not only bring a blessed Light to the Scriptures, and shew us the Meaning in general; but it is a Spirit of Application, to bring home those gracious Promises to every one in particular; to tell us the Things that are given *us* of GOD; not only the Things that are given to the Church, but to *us* in particular: For the Spirit of GOD will tell us what is in the Breast of GOD, his secret Good-will to the Church. He loves the Church, and He loves *thee*, saith the Spirit. Therefore He is called an *Earneſt*, and a *Seal* in our Hearts, because He discovers not only the Truth at large; but he discovers the Truth of GOD's Affection, in all the Privileges of the Gospel, that they belong to us. What a blessed Discovery is this; that not only reveals
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Divine Truths to us; but reveals them so to us, that we have our Share and Interest in them?

2. AGAIN, If we would understand these Mysteries, let us labour for humble Spirits; for the Spirit works that Disposition in the first Place: *The Humble, GOD will teach*, Psal. xxv. 9. The Humble, that will depend upon his Teaching. We must be content *to become Fools, that we may be wise*. We must deny our own Understandings, and be content to have no more Understanding in Divine Things, than we can carry out of GOD's Book; than we can be taught by GOD's Word and Ordinances. This Humility we must bring, if we will understand this Mystery.

3. WE must bring withal, a serious Desire to know, with a Purpose to be moulded to what we know, to be deliver'd to the Obedience of what we know; for then GOD will discover it to us. *Wisdom is easy to him that will understand*. Together then with Prayer and Humility, let us but bring a Purpose and Desire to be taught, and we shall find Divine Wisdom easy. None ever miscarry in the Church, but those that have false Hearts; that have not humble and sincere Hearts, willing to be taught. If they have that, then GOD, that hath given this Resolution, that they will use the Means, and will be taught, will suit it with Teachers. GOD usually suits Men with Teachers fit for their Dispositions.

4. TAKE Heed of Passion and Prejudice; of carnal Affections, that stir up Passion; for they will make the Soul that it cannot see Mysteries that are plain in themselves. As we are strong in any Passion, so we judge; and the Heart, when it is given up to Passion, transforms the Truth to

its own self. When the Taste is vitiated, it tastes Things not as they are in themselves, but as it-self is; even so the corrupt Heart transforms this sacred Mystery to its own self, and oftentimes forceth Scripture to defend its own Sin. When the Heart is deeply engaged in any Passion or Affection, it will believe what it lists; it will force it-self to believe what it loves. Let us labour therefore to come with purged Hearts to receive these Mysteries: They will lodge only in clean Hearts. Let us labour to see GOD and *Christ* with a clear Eye, free from Passion, Covetousness and Vain-glory.

THUS much concerning Godliness, as it is a *Mystery*: The next Thing observable is, That it is

A great Mystery.

1. HERE I might be endless: For it is not only great, as a Mystery; that is, as there is much of it concealed; but it is a great and excellent Mystery, if we regard whence it came; that is, from the Bosom of GOD, from the Wisdom of GOD. If we regard all that had any Hand in it; as GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; the Angels, attending upon the Church; the Apostles, the Pen-men; Preachers and Ministers, the Publishers of it; it is a great Mystery.

2. IF we regard the End of it; which is to bring together GOD and Man; Man that was fallen; to bring him back again to GOD; to bring him from the Depth of Misery, to the Heighth of all Happiness; it is a great Mystery in this Respect.

3. AGAIN, it is a great Mystery, on Account of the manifold Wisdom that GOD discover'd in the

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the Publishing of it; which was by certain Degrees: First, in Types; afterwards He came to Truths: First, in Promises; and then, Performances: First, the *Jews* were the Church of GOD; and then came in the *Gentiles*. Thus the Manner of conveying it from Time to Time, from the Beginning of the World, display'd manifold and deep Wisdom; it was a great Mystery.

4. AGAIN, it is a great Mystery, for the Work thereof; which is, it transforms those that know it into the Likeness of *Christ*; it gives spiritual Sight to the Blind, Ears to the Deaf, and spiritual Life to the Dead. Whatsoever *Christ* did, in the Days of his Flesh, to the outward Man, that He doth by his Spirit to the inward Man. Even by the Publication of this Mystery, Wonders are wrought daily.

5. IT is a great Mystery, if compared to all other Mysteries. Creation was a great Mystery; for all Things to be made out of Nothing; Order, out of Confusion; for GOD to make Man a glorious Creature of the Dust of the Earth: But what is this in Comparison of GOD's being made Man? It was a great and wondrous Thing, for *Israel* to be delivered out of *Egypt* and *Babylon*; but what are those, to the Deliverance out of Hell and Damnation, by the Gospel? What are the Mysteries of Nature, the Miracles of Nature, such as the Loadstone, to these supernatural Mysteries? There are Mysteries in the Providence of God, in governing the World; Mysteries of Satan, Mysteries of Iniquity: But what are all Mysteries, either of Nature, or Hell, to this *Great Mystery of Godliness*; which the Apostle observes to be a great Mystery

Without Controversy.

It is so under the broad Seal of publick Confession (as the Word *ὁμολογουμένως*, in the Original, signifies): It is a confessed Truth, that the Mystery of Godliness is great. As if the Apostle had said: I need not give you greater Confirmation; it is without Question a great Mystery. But here see that you take the Apostle's Meaning right: For it is certain that carnal Minds and profane Wits of the Age do controvert this great Mystery. St. Paul therefore means that it is without Controversy, upon these two Accounts:

1. THAT in itself it is not to be doubted of. It is a great grounded Truth, as clear as if the Gospel were written with a Sun-beam. There is nothing clearer, and more out of Controversy, than sacred evangelical Truths.

2. THAT as they are clear in themselves, so they are apprehended of all God's People. All that are the Children of the Church, that have their Eyes open, without all Doubt and Controversy, embrace it. Things are not so clear in the Gospel, that all that are sinful and rebellious, may see whether they will or no; but to those that are disposed, and have sanctified Souls, they are without Controversy.

So much for the Preface, *Without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness*. Now we come to the Particulars of this great Mystery,

God manifest in the Flesh.

THIS, and the other Branches that follow, are all spoken of *Christ*. Indeed, the Mystery of God-
liness

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liness is nothing but *Christ*, and that which *Christ* did: So that from the general we may observe this, that *Christ is the Scope of the Scripture*. *Christ* is the Pearl of that Ring; *Christ* is the Center wherein all those Lines end. Take away *Christ*, and what remains? Therefore in the whole Scriptures, let us see that we have an Eye to *Christ*; for all is Nothing but *Christ*. The Mystery of Religion is, *Christ manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory*. All is but *Christ*.

THE Reason why the *Jews* understand not the Scriptures better, is, because they seek not *Christ* there. Take away *Christ*, and you take away all out of the Scriptures; they are but empty Things without Him. Therefore, when we read them, let us think of somewhat that may lead us to *Christ*, as all the Scriptures lead (one Way or other) to Him.

BUT to proceed; the Apostle begins with this, *GOD manifest in the Flesh*: That is, GOD the Son, the second Person in the holy Trinity, was manifest in the Flesh; that is, in Human Nature. So GOD the Son put on the Human Nature; and not only so, but with it also our Infirmities, Weakness and Miseries; and which is more, He took our Flesh, when it was tainted with Treason; our base Nature, after it was fallen.

Now in that GOD, the second Person, appeared in our Nature; in our weak, tainted, and disgraced Nature, after the Fall; from hence comes first of all, the Enriching of our Nature with all Graces, in *Christ*. In *Christ*, there is Abundance of Riches; our Nature, in Him, is highly enriched.

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HENCE comes again, the Ennobling of our Nature. In that GOD appeared in our Nature, it is much ennobled. When our Nature is engrafted into a higher Stock, a mean Graff into so glorious a Stock as *Christ*, it is a high Dignity. That our Flesh is now married to the second Person, it is a wondrous Advancement of our Nature, even above the Angelical: *He took not the Nature of Angels.* It was a great Exaltation to our Nature, that GOD should take it into the Unity of his Person.

IN the third Place, the Enabling of our Nature to the Work of Salvation, that was wrought in it, came from hence; GOD was *in the Flesh*. From whence was the Human Nature enabled to suffer? Whence was it upheld in suffering, that it did not sink under the Wrath of GOD? GOD was *in the Flesh*; GOD upheld our Nature: So that the Riches, Dignity, and Ability of our Nature to be saving, and meritorious, all came from this, that GOD was in our Nature.

HENCE it comes likewise, that whatsoever *Christ* did in our Nature, GOD did it; for GOD appeared in our Nature: He took not upon Him the Person of any Man, but the Nature: And therefore, our Flesh and the second Person being but one Person, all that was done, was done by the Person that was GOD (tho' not as GOD).

HENCE comes also the Union between *Christ* and us. We are *Sons of GOD*, because He was *the Son of Man*; GOD *in our Flesh*. There are three Unions: 1. The Union of Natures, GOD became *Man*; 2. The Union of Grace, *We are one with Christ*; and, 3. The Union of Glory. The first, is for the second, and the second, for the third: GOD became *Man*, that *Man* might be one with
GOD;

GOD; GOD was *manifest in the Flesh*, that we might be united to Him; and being brought again to GOD the Father, we might come to a glorious Union. Hence likewise comes the Efficacy of what *Christ* did. That the Dying of one Man should be sufficient for the whole World, it was, because GOD was in the *Flesh*.

WELL, then may the Apostle call this, GOD *manifest in the Flesh*, a Mystery; and place it in the first Rank. For GOD to be included in the Womb of a Virgin; for Happiness itself to become a Curse; for Him that hath the Riches of all in Him, to become poor for our Sakes; for Him that ever enjoyed his Father's Presence, to want the Beams of it for a Time, that He might satisfy his Father's Justice, and undergo his Wrath for our Sins; here is Matter of Wonder indeed.

THIS teacheth us what to do, when we find any Trouble arise in our Consciences for Sins and Unworthiness: We should then cast ourselves upon GOD, that became *Flesh* for us, and died for us; let us stay ourselves there. I am unworthy, a Lump of Sin, there is nothing in me that is Good! Oh! but I have all in *Christ*, He hath Abundance for me, his Fullness is for me! *The Fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily*. Therefore, in all Doubts in Regard of Sin and Unworthiness, let us labour for Faith; (for Faith is a Grace, that carries us out of ourselves, and plants and fixes us in *Christ*;) Let us consider ourselves as in Him, and consider whatsoever is in Him, as being for us.

AGAIN, oppose *Christ* to the Wrath of GOD, and the Temptations of *Satan*, for all will fall before this GOD *manifest in the Flesh*: He is GOD, therefore He can subdue all; He is Man. and therefore He

He will love us. *I know Whom I have believed:* Him that is merciful, because He is Man, and hath taken my Nature; and Him that can subdue all Enemies, because He is GOD, GOD *in the Flesh*: A fit Foundation for Faith to rely upon. Let us have Recourse to this therefore, in all Temptations whatsoever. We cannot glorify GOD and *Christ* more, than to go out of ourselves, and fix our Comfort here.

By this Incarnation of *Christ*, we have Communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; this brings us into Fellowship with the blessed Trinity; and it teacheth us what Thoughts we should have of GOD; even to have loving Thoughts of Him. Whence is it, that we can call GOD, Father? From this, GOD *was manifest in the Flesh*. Hence I can call GOD, Father; can boldly go to Him, and conceive of Him as gracious and lovely. And whence is it, that our Persons are become lovely to GOD? From this; GOD hath taken our Nature upon Him; therefore our Nature is become lovely to Him, and his is sweet and fatherly to us.

LET not *Satan*, therefore, abuse our Imaginations, if we have a Mind to turn to God: For, indeed, there is no Comfort to them that go on in their Sins; *they treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath*; they are in Danger of Damnation every Minute of their Lives; there is but a Step between them and Hell. But for such as intend to turn to GOD, GOD meets them half Way. We see the Prodigal did but entertain a Purpose to come to his Father, and his Father meets him. GOD *in our Flesh* hath made GOD peaceable to us. If we go to *Christ*, and lay hold on Him for the Forgiveness of our Sins, GOD in Him is become a loving, gracious Father to us.

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OH! What Boldness have we now to go to GOD in our *Flesh*! To think of GOD absolutely, He is a *consuming Fire*, every Way terrible: But to think of GOD in our Nature, we may securely go to Him; He is *Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh*. We may securely go to GOD, our Brother, to Him that is of one Nature with us, and now having our Nature in Heaven. Think of GOD born of a Virgin, of GOD lying in the Cradle, sucking the Breast; think of GOD going up and down teaching, and doing all Good; think of GOD sweating for thee, hanging on the Cross, shedding his Blood, lying in the Grave, raising Himself again, and now in Heaven, *sitting at the Right Hand of GOD*, our Intercessor; conceive of GOD in this *Flesh* of ours, lovely to us; and now our Nature must needs be lovely to Him. The Nature of GOD must needs be lovely to us, since he hath joined our poor beggarly *Flesh* to the Unity of the second Person. Let us think of GOD *manifest in the Flesh*. To think of GOD alone, it swallows up our Thoughts; but to think of GOD in *Christ*, it is a comfortable Consideration. *None can ever see GOD, and live*; that is, GOD nakedly, or absolutely. Oh! but GOD *manifest in our Flesh*, we may see; and it shall be our Happiness in Heaven, to see Him there; to see GOD in our *Flesh Face to Face*.

WE cannot too often meditate of these Things; it is the Life and Soul of a Christian; it is the Marrow of the Gospel; it is the Wonder of Wonders; we need not wonder at any Thing, after this. It is no Wonder, that our Bodies should rise again; that mortal Man should become immortal in Heaven; since the immortal GOD hath taken Man's Nature, and died in it. All the Articles of our Faith, and all Miracles, yield to this grand Thing,
GOD

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God manifest in the Flesh. Believe this, and believe all other.

Justified in the Spirit.

These Words are added, to answer an Objection that may rise from the former. He was *God manifest in the Flesh*; He veiled Himself, He could not have suffered else. When He took upon Him to be the Mediator, He must do it in abased Flesh. If *Christ* (being *God*) had not abased Himself, He could never have been put to Death; *Satan*, and *his* Instruments, would never have meddled with Him: But *God*, being veiled in the Flesh, being clouded with our Flesh and Infirmities; He was taken, and by wicked Hands crucified and slain. He appeared to be nothing but a poor, debased, dejected Man, and as such was persecuted, slandered, and slain in the World. He was thought to be a Sinner: But it was no Matter what He appeared, when He was veiled with our Flesh; He was *justified in the Spirit*.

To be justified here, implies two Things. 1. A Clearing from false Imputations; and, 2. A Declaring Him to be, what He was. When a Man is cleared from that which is laid to his Charge, he is justified; or he is declared to be that he is. *Wisdom is justified of her Children*; that is, cleared from the Imputations that are laid upon Religion, and declared to be an excellent Thing, of all her Children. So *Christ* was justified: He was cleared, not to be as they took Him; and declared Himself to be the Son of *God*, the true *Messias*, and Saviour of the World.

He was *justified in the Spirit*; that is, in his Godhead: The Godhead shewed itself in his Life and Death, in his Resurrection and in his Ascension. Though He was *God in the Flesh*, yet He re-

remained GOD still, and was justified to be so in the Spirit, in his Divine Power. GOD hath the Name of the Spirit, from his Purity, Power and Vigour. So GOD is a Spirit; that is, pure, opposite to gross Things, Earth and Flesh; and GOD is powerful and strong. *The Horses of the Egyptians are Flesh; and not Spirit*; that is, they are weak; a Spirit is strong. So much Spirit as we have, so much Strength. So, by the Purity and Strength of the Divine Nature, *Christ* discovered Himself to be true GOD, as well as true Man: And this was in the Time of his Abasement. In the greatest Extremity of his Abasement, there was Somewhat that came from *Christ*, to justify Him, that He was the Son of GOD, the true *Messias*. There is no Part of his Abasement, but some Beams of his GOD-Head did break forth in it.

CHRIST was made Flesh; but He took upon Him the Flesh of a Virgin: Could that be otherwise than by the Spirit, to be born of a Virgin, she remaining a Virgin? When He was born, He was laid in a Manger. Indeed, there was GOD in the low Estate of the Flesh: Yea, but the *Wise-men worshipped Him*, and the Star directed them; there He was justified in the Spirit. He was tossed when He was asleep in the Ship, but He commanded the Winds and the Waves. He wanted Money to pay Tribute, as He was abased; but to fetch it out of a Fish, there He was justified: The one was an Argument of his Poverty and Meanness; but the other was an Argument, that He was another Manner of Person than the World took Him for; that He had all the Creatures at his Command. He was apprehended as a Malefactor; but He struck them all down with his Word, *Whom seek ye?*

LET us come to the greatest Abasement: When He was on the Cross, He hung between two Thieves; yea, but He converted one of them. When the Thief had so much Discouragement, to see his Saviour hang on the Cross; yet He shewed such Power in that Abasement, that the very Thief could see Him to be a King, and was converted by his Spirit. He hung upon the Cross; but at the same Time there was such an Eclipse, that the whole World was darken'd, the Earth trembled, the Rocks brake, the *Centurion* justified Him; *Doubtless, this was the Son of GOD.*

NAY, at the lowest Degree of Abasement of all, when He struggled with the Wrath of GOD, and was beset with Devils, He triumphed. When He was visibly overcome, He then invisibly overcame. He was an invisible Conqueror, when He was visibly subdued. Did He not on the Cross satisfy the Wrath of GOD, and by enduring the Wrath of GOD, free us from it, and from *Satan*, GOD's Goaler, and reconcile us by his Blood? The chief Works of all, were wrought in his chief Abasement. At length He died, and was buried: But He that died, rose again gloriously; therefore He *was mightily declared to be the Son of GOD, by raising Himself from the Dead.* That was the greatest Abasement, when He lay in the Grave; and especially then He was *justified* by his Resurrection from the Dead, and his Ascension into Glory. So, if we go from *Christ's* Birth, to his lowest Degree of Abasement, there was alway some Manifestation of his Justification by the Spirit.

Now *Christ* was justified in a double Regard: 1. In regard of GOD, He was justified, and cleared from our Sins that He took upon Him: He *bore our Sins upon the Tree*, and bore them away, that they

they should never appear again to our Discomfort. He was made a *Curse for us*. But how came *Christ* to be cleared of our Sins that lay upon Him? As by the Spirit, by his Divine Nature, He raised Himself from the Dead; so He was justified from that, which God laid upon Him. He was our Surety: Now the Spirit raising Him from the Dead, shewed that the Debt was fully discharged, because our Surety was out of Prison. All Things are first in *Christ*, and then in us: He was acquitted and justified from our Sins, and then we.

2. He was justified by the Spirit, from all Imputations of Men; from the Mis-conceits that the World had of Him: They thought Him to be a mere Man, or a sinful Man: Not so; He was more than a mere Man; nay, he was more than a holy Man; He was God-man. Whence were his Miracles? Were they not from his Divine Power? He overcame the Devil, in his Temptations. Who can overcome the Devil, but He that is the Son of God? He cast out the Devils, and dispossest them with his Word. All the Enemies of *Christ* that ever were, at length He conquered, and so declared Himself mightily to be the Son of God. He healed the outward Man, and the inward Man, by his Divine Power: He caused the spiritual, as well as the bodily Eyes, to see; the Dead to live, and the Lame to go. Whatsoever He did in the Body, He did in the Soul likewise. In those excellent Miracles He was justified, and declared to be the Son of God, especially in his Resurrection, and Ascension, and daily converting of Souls by his Ministry; all being done by his Spirit, which is his Vicar in the World, ruling his Church, and subduing his Enemies; so that He was every Way justified in the Spirit to be God, to be the true *Messias*, prophesied of, and promised to the Church.

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Church. Therefore He was justified in his Truth, that all the Promises were true of Him; and in his Faithfulness, that He was faithful in performing the Promises He made; He was justified in his Goodness, and Mercy, and all those Attributes: Thus He was *justified in the Spirit*.

Seen of Angels.

HE was seen. It is true; but He was seen with Admiration, and Wonder. It implies the Consequence of Sight: Sight stirs up Affection, it stirs up the whole Soul; therefore it is put for all the rest.

THEY saw Him with Wonder: For, was it not a Wonder, that GOD should stoop so low, as to be shut up in a Virgin's Womb? That *Christ* should humble Himself so low, as to be GOD in our *Flesh*? Was not here exceeding wondrous Love and Mercy to Mankind, to wretched Man, having passed by the glorious Angels that were fallen? And exceeding Wisdom in GOD, in satisfying his Justice, that He might shew Mercy? It was Matter of Admiration to the Angels, to see the great GOD stoop so low, to be clothed in such a poor Nature as Mans. This doubtless is the Meaning of the Holy Ghost; they saw it with Admiration.

AND because *Christ* was their Head, as the second Person, and they were Creatures to attend upon Him, therefore they so wondred at Him, as that they attended upon *Christ* in all the Passages of his Humiliation, and Exaltation; in his Life, in his Death, in his Resurrection and Ascension.

THEY saw Him so, as they were Witnesses of Him to Men; they gave Testimony of Him: So
that

that it is a full Word, in the Intention of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, not only the Angels, but all gave Witness of Him, from the highest Heavens to Hell itself; all witnessed *Christ* to be the true *Messias*.

In his Baptism, there was the Trinity; the Father, in a *Voice from Heaven*; the Holy Ghost, in the Shape of a Dove: He had the Witness of Angels, of Men of all Ranks, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, Men and Women; yea, the Devils themselves oftentimes confessed Him in the Gospel: He was witnessed of all Ranks; they saw Him, and gave Evidence of Him, that He was the true *Messias*. He was seen of Angels.

AND, they did not only see these Things, but they wondred at the Love, and Mercy, and Wisdom of GOD, in the Head and Members of the Church; as we see in divers Places; so, 1 Pet. i. 12. *We preach the Gospel, which Things the Angels desire to look into*: The very Angels desire to pry and look with Admiration into the wondrous Things of the Gospel. So in Ephes. iii. 10. *To the Intent that unto Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, might be made known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of GOD*. There is somewhat done by Christ, by his Incarnation, Resurrection and Government of his Church, that the very Angels look into with Wonder. They wonder at his Wisdom in restoring Mankind; and there is such a World of Wonders in the Government of the Church, such manifold Wisdom, that the very Angels themselves look upon this with Admiration and great Delight.

Now as *Christ* was seen, and attended on by Angels, so is the Church of *Christ*. As the Angels guarded and attended Him; so they guard and at-

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tend all that are his: For *are they not all ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation?* Heb. i. 14. And they will not only be our Attendants for a While, and then leave us, but they will continue to be so forever. For, so long as the Church hath any Relation to *Christ*, so long the Angels shall respect the Church: But the Church hath Relation to *Christ* forever; therefore the blessed Angels shall have Respect to *Christ* and the Church forever.

You should observe that the Angels have a double Office; a superior Office, and an inferior; and as the superior Office is to attend upon GOD, to serve GOD and *Christ*, to minister to our Head; so the inferior is to attend his Church, and to conflict with the evil Angels that are about us continually. It is good for us to know our Prerogatives, our Privileges, and our Strength; not to make us proud, but to stir us up to Thankfulness, and to a holy Carriage answerable. It is a Point not much thought on by the best of us all; we forget it and betray our own Comfort. *Satan* abuseth us, to make us forget the Dignity, and Strength that we have: And hereby we dishonour GOD, and wrong ourselves; and we likewise wrong the holy Angels for Want of a due Consideration of these Things.

WELL then, let us think of this so, as to make a due Use of it. It is necessary oftentimes to think what a Degree GOD hath raised us to, in *Jesus Christ*; that we have this glorious Attendance about us, wherever we are. A Christian is a more excellent Creature than he thinks of; he is continually attended by Angels. Indeed we do not see them, as in former Time, before *Christ*'s Incarnation; because now, since *Christ* is come, the Government of *Christ* is spiritual, and we are not supported with those

those glorious Manifestations; but they are about us in an invisible Manner. We have *Elisha's* Guard about us now continually; tho' we see them not, *Christ's* Angels, are our Angels; they are Angels even of Children; of little Ones. Nay, let a Man be never so poor, even as *Lazarus*, he shall have the Attendance of Angels, in Life and Death. This should comfort us when all the World besides forsakes us, and set themselves in Array against us, that we have, as it were, the Life-Guards of Heaven appointed of GOD to attend us, and that *more are they that are for us, than they that are against us*. It should likewise move us to a reverent Carriage at all Times and in all Places; and moreover beget in us a thankful Heart, that GOD hath vouchsafed so to honour such vile unworthy Worms.

Preached to the Gentiles.

CHRIST our blessed Saviour, being the King of his Church, it was not sufficient that He was *manifest in the Flesh*, and *justified in the Spirit*; that is, declared by his Divine Power, to be GOD; but He must have his Nobles to acknowledge this too. Kings in their Inaugurations, not only make good their own Title, but they would have others acknowledge it; therefore it is said *Christ* was *seen of Angels*, those noble and glorious Creatures.

BUT not only the greatest of the Kingdom, but likewise the meaner Subjects must know their King; there must be a Proclamation to them, to know who is to rule over them. Therefore, *Christ* being a general King, there must be a general Publication of Him all the World over; He must be *preached to the Gentiles*.

To

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To unfold the Point a little, I will shew; 1. What it is to preach. 2. What it is to preach *Christ*. And 3. What it is to preach *Christ* to the *Gentiles*.

1. To preach is to open the Mystery of *Christ*; to open whatsoever is in *Christ*; to break open the Box, that the Saviour may be perceived of all; in a Word, to open *Christ's* Natures, and Person, what it is. To open the Offices of *Christ*; first He was a Prophet to teach, wherefore He came into the World: Then He was a Priest, offering the Sacrifice of Himself; and then after He had offer'd his Sacrifice, He was a King; He was more publickly, and more gloriously known to be a King to rule: After He had gained a People, by his Priesthood and Offering, then He was to be a King to govern them.

2. To preach *Christ*, is to lay open these Things: And not only that, but likewise the States, wherein He executed his Office. First, the State of Humiliation: *Christ* was first abased, and then glorified. The Flesh He took upon Him, was first sanctified, and then abased; and then He made it glorious Flesh. He could not work our Salvation, but in a State of Abasement; He could not apply it to us, but in a State of Glory. So then, to preach *Christ*, is to open the Merits of *Christ*, what He hath wrought to his Father for us: To open his Efficacy, as the spiritual Head of the Church; what Wonders He works in his Children, by altering and raising of them, by fitting and preparing them for Heaven: Likewise to open all the Promises in *Christ*, which are but *Christ* parcelled out. *All the Promises in Christ, are Yea, and Amen.* They are made for *Christ's* Sake, and performed for *Christ's* Sake; they are all but *Christ*, severed

severed into so many particular gracious Blessings. To preach *Christ*, is to lay open all this, which is the Inheritance of God's People.

BUT it is not sufficient in Preaching *Christ*, to lay open all this in the View of others; but in the Opening of them, there must be Application of them to the Use of God's People, that they may see their Interest in them; and there must be an Alluring of them. The Preachers are the Friends of the Bridegroom, that are to procure the Marriage between *Christ* and his Church: Therefore, they are not only to lay open the Riches of the Husband, but likewise to entreat for a Marriage, and to use all the Gifts and Parts that God hath given them, to bring *Christ* and his Church together.

AND because People by Nature are in a contrary State to *Christ*; to preach *Christ*, is to begin with the Law, to discover to People their State by Nature. A Man can never preach the Gospel, that makes not Way for it, by shewing and convincing People what they are out of *Christ*? That He must be had, or else they die eternally? Now when People are convinced of this, then they get out of themselves to *Christ*. This therefore must be done, because it is that, which makes Way to the Preaching of *Christ*; for, *a full Stomach despiseth an Honey-comb*. Who cares for Balm, that is not sick? Who cares for *Christ*, that sees not the Necessity of Him? Therefore we see *John Baptist* came before *Christ*, to make Way for Him; to level the Mountains; to cast down whatsoever exalts itself in Man. He that is to preach, must discern what Mountains there are between Mens Hearts and *Christ*; and He must labour to lay flat all the Pride of Men in the Dust.

AFTER

AFTER this, the Gospel is to be promulgated in this sweet Manner; *I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of GOD, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is your reasonable Service: And be not conform'd to this World; but be ye transformed by the Renewing of your Mind.* The Law comes with *Curfed, Curfed*; but now in the Gospel, *Christ* is preached with sweet Alluring; *We as Ambassadors, as if GOD by us did beseech you, pray you in Christ's Stead, be reconciled to GOD.* This is the Manner of the Dispensation in the Gospel, even to beg of People that they would be good to their own Souls. *Christ*, as it were, becomes a Beggar Himself; and the great GOD of Heaven and Earth begs our Love, that we would so care for our own Souls, that we would be reconciled to Him. It was fitter indeed we should beg of Him; it was fit we should seek to be reconciled to Him: But GOD so stoops in the Dispensation of the Gospel, that He becomes a Suitor to us, to be good to our own Souls: As if He had offended us, He desires us to be reconciled. The Wrong is done on our Part, yet He so far transcends the Doubtings of Man's Nature, that He would have Nothing to cause Man's Heart to mis-give, no Doubts nor Scruples to arise; He Himself becomes a Beseecher of Reconciliation, as if He were the Party that had offended.

Now this Preaching is that whereby GOD dispenseth Salvation and Grace ordinarily; and He in Wisdom sees it the fittest Way to dispense his Grace to Men by Men, in Order to try our Obedience to the Truth itself. He would have Men regard the Things spoken, not for the Person that speaks them, but for the Excellency of the Things. If some glorious Creatures, as the Angels, should preach to us, we should regard the Excellency of the

the Preachers, more than the Truth itself; we should believe the Truth for the Messengers Sake. And again, GOD would knit Man to Man by Bands of Love; now there is a Relation between Pastor and People, by this Ordinance of GOD. Moreover the Preaching of Men is more suitable to our Condition: We could not hear GOD speak, or any more excellent Creature. And GOD magnifies his Power the more, in blessing these weak Means. Likewise it is more proportionable to our Weakness, to have Men that speak out of Experience from themselves to preach the Gospel, that they have felt the Comfort of themselves; it works the more upon us. Therefore those that first preached the Gospel, were such as had first felt the Sweetness of it themselves.

BUT some are ready to say; "Cannot I as well read privately at Home?" Yes; but the Use of private Exercises, with Contempt of the Publick, have a Curse upon them, instead of a Blessing. It is with such Men as with those that gathered *Manna*, when they should not; It stank. Hath GOD set up an Ordinance for Nothing? For us to despise? Is not He wiser, to know what is good for us, better than we do ourselves? GOD accompanies his Ordinance with the Presence of his blessed Spirit. The Truth read at Home, hath an Efficacy; but the Truth unfolded, hath more. As we say of Milk warmed, it is fitter for Nourishment; and the Rain from Heaven hath a Fatness with it, and a special Influence, more than other standing Waters: So there is not that Life, Operation and Blessing, accompanies other Means, as there doth Preaching; that being the ordinary Means, where it may be had

OTHERS

OTHERS perhaps may object "Preaching is only for the Laying the Foundation of a Church; it is not for a Church, when it is built: Then, other Helps; as Prayer and the like, without this, may suffice." But I say, Those that have such Conceits, make themselves wiser than the Spirit of GOD. We learn from S. Paul, That *Christ when He ascended on high, led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts to Men, some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, for the Edifying and Building up of the Church,* Ephes. iv. 8, 11, 12. So that this Ordinance is Necessary for Building up still; and for the Knitting of the Members of *Christ* together still: Therefore, that is a vain Excuse.

OH! but they cry, "What needs so much Preaching? Less would suffice." Thus some People come to despise this heavenly Manna; but those that are acquainted with their own Infirmities, think it a Happiness, to have Plenty: For, we are dull, we are forgetful, we are unmindful; tho' we know, we do not remember; and tho' we remember, yet we do not mind Things. We are naturally weak, and therefore we need all spiritual Supports and Helps that may be. The more we hear, and know, the fitter we are for doing, and suffering: Our Souls are fitter for Communion with GOD, for all Passages both of Life and Death: Therefore we cannot have too much Care this Way.

OTHERS object, they know it well enough; and therefore they need not be taught. Let such know, that the Word of GOD preached, is not altogether to teach us, but (the Spirit going with it) to work Grace, necessary to *strengthen us in the inward Man*. And those that say they know it enough, deceive themselves; they know it not. Religion is a Mystery; and can it be learned at the first?

There

There is no Mystery, but it requires many Years to learn; And is Religion, and the Depths of it learned so soon? Not ordinarily. There is a Mystery in every Grace, (in Repentance, in Faith, in Patience) that no Man knows, but those that have those Graces.

LET us therefore set a Price upon GOD's Ordinance. There must be this Dispensation: *Christ* must be preached. Preaching is the Chariot that carries *Christ* up and down the World. The Ordinance of Preaching is a Gift of all Gifts. GOD esteems it so, *Christ* esteems it so, and so should we esteem it. So then there must be much Preaching, and this Preaching must be of *Christ*.

BUT "What (say some) must Nothing be preached but *Christ*?" I answer; Nothing but *Christ*, or that which tends to *Christ*. If we preach Threatnings, it is to cast Men down, that we may raise them up; as if a Physician purge, it is, that he may give Cordials. Whatsoever is done in Preaching, to humble Men, it is to raise them up again in *Christ*; all makes Way for *Christ*. When Men are dejected by the Law, we must not leave them there, but raise them up again. Whatever we preach, it is reductive to *Christ*, that Men may walk worthy of *Christ*. When Men have been taught *Christ*, they must be taught to walk worthy of *Christ*, and of their Calling; that they may carry themselves fruitfully, holily and constantly, every Way suitable for so glorious a Profession. The Foundation of all Duties must be from *Christ*: The Graces for these Duties must be fetched from *Christ*; and the Reasons and Motives of a Christian's Conversation, the prevailing Reasons of an holy Life, must be fetched from *Christ*, and from the State that *Christ* hath advanced us unto. So

then *Christ* alone must be preached. But to whom?
To the Gentiles.

3. To preach *Christ* to the *Gentiles* is to publish to them the glad Tidings of Salvation thro' *Christ*: To declare to them all that is contained in the *Preaching of Christ*: To declare Him a *Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the Glory of his People Israel.*

It is not to be imagined, in what Misery the poor *Gentiles* were, before the Coming of *Christ*, except some few Profelytes that joined themselves to the *Jewish Church*; for the *Gentiles* worshipped Devils. What were all their Gods, but Devils? They were under the Kingdom of *Satan*, when the Gospel came to be preached among them. They were translated out of the Kingdom of *Satan*, into the blessed and glorious Kingdom of *Christ*. Yet we see here, notwithstanding they were such Kind of People, the Mystery of the Gospel is preached to them, even to the *Gentiles*: A Mystery of Mercy and Grace!

BUT this is not enough; upon Proclamation of *Christ*, there must be Homage of all those that He is proclaimed a King to: Therefore it follows;

Believed on in the World.

THIS Point follows the other foregoing, by a necessary Order: For, Preaching goes before Faith; Faith is the Fruit of Preaching. *Christ* is first preached to the *Gentiles*, and then, *believed on in the World*: That is, the World must submit, and give Homage to *Christ*, as the Saviour of the World, as the Mediator of Mankind.

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THE Points considerable here are these: 1. That there must be a Dispensation of Salvation wrought by *Christ*, unto others: It is not sufficient, that Salvation was wrought by *Christ manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit*; but this Salvation must be published and dispensed to others: Therefore he saith, *Preached to the Gentiles*. 2. That this Publication and Preaching must be of *Christ*: *Christ* must be published to the Gentiles; that is, to all. The Church is enlarged since the Coming of *Christ*. And, 3. The Fruit of this Preaching, *Christ* being thus dispensed to the *Gentiles*, the World believes.

THERE *must be a Dispensation of Christ*. The Equity of this may be seen, even from Things among Men. It is not sufficient, that Physick be provided; but there must be an Application of it. It was not sufficient, that there was a *brazen Serpent*; but, the *brazen Serpent* must be *lifted up*, that the People might see it. It is not sufficient, that there is a Standard; but, the Standard must be set up. It is not sufficient, that there be a Foundation; but, there must be a Building upon the Foundation. Therefore there must be a Dispensation of the *Mysteries of Christ*.

HERE let us observe, that there are several Degrees of the Dispensation of Salvation. There is 1. The Ordaining of Salvation; that was, before all Worlds. 2. The Promise of Salvation; that was, when *Adam* fell. 3. The Procuring of Salvation promised; that was, by *Christ*, when he came in the *Flesh*. 4. The Promulgation, and Enlarging of Salvation to all People; this was, after *Christ* was come in the *Flesh*. 5. The perfect Consummation of Salvation; that is, in Heaven. Now the Execution of the Promise, and the Enlargement

ment of it to all Nations, was reserved to *Christ's* Coming in the Flesh. I do but touch this, to shew that GOD hath had a special Care of this latter Age of the World. Some account the first Age of the World, to be a Golden Age; but, indeed, we may invert the Order; we live in the Golden Age, the last Ages, when *Christ* was manifested. What is the Glory of Times and Places? The *Manifestation* of *Christ*. The more *Christ* is laid open with his *unsearchable Riches*, the more GOD glorifies those Times and Places: And that is the Golden Age, wherein the Gospel is preached.

LET us labour then to value this inestimable Benefit. Where the Gospel is not preached, there the Places are Salt-pits, despicable Places: Whatsoever they are else, they are under the Kingdom of *Satan*. It is the Glory of a Nation, to have the Truth among them. *The Glory of Israel* was gone, when the Ark was taken: The Religion and Truth we enjoy, is our Ark; our Glory is gone, if we part with that. Therefore, whatsoever GOD takes from us, let us desire, that He would still continue the Gospel of Truth; that He would still vouchsafe to dwell among us, and not leave us. What were all Things in the World besides, if we had not the blessed Truth of GOD? We must leave all e're long. Therefore let us labour to have the Eyes of our Understanding enlightened, to conceive aright of the Difference of Things, and to value ourselves by this, that *Christ* is manifested to us; and thereby we have Interest in *Christ*, more than by any Portion in the World besides: For, then *Christ* will delight to be with us still, when we esteem, and prize, and value Him.

OBSERVE, after *Preached to the Gentiles*, the Apostle joins, *Believed on in the World*; to shew, that

that Faith comes by Hearing. Indeed, Preaching is the Ordinance of God, sanctified for the Begetting of Faith, for the Opening of the Understanding, for the Drawing of the Will and Affections to *Christ*. Faith is the Marriage of the Soul to *Christ*. Now, in Marriage, there must not be a Mistake and Error in the Person; therefore, that the Person to whom we are to be married by Faith, may be known to us, there is an Ordinance of Preaching set up, to lay open our own Necessity, what we are without Him, and to open the Riches of our Husband; whatsoever is glorious in *Christ*. *How shall they call upon Him, in whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe, without a Preacher?* We cannot have the Spirit of Prayer, without Faith; nor Faith, without Preaching. And the Wise Man saith, *He that turns his Ear from Hearing the Law, (under what Pretence soever) his Prayer shall be abominable.*

IN the Ministry of the Gospel, there is not only an Unfolding of the excellent Things of *Christ*, but there is Grace given by the Spirit, to believe: And herein this Publication differs from all other. Men may publish what they would have, but they cannot give Hearts to believe it: But in the blessed Publishing of Divine Truths, there is the Spirit of God accompanying it, to work what it publisheth: It opens the Riches of *Christ*, and offers *Christ*, and *Christ* is given to the Heart with it: It publisheth what is to be believed and known, and, together with it, there goes a Power to do all. Therefore it is called the *Ministry of the Spirit*; because what is published in the Preaching of the Word, to those that belong to God, hath the Spirit to convey it to the Soul. Therefore he saith here, first preached, and then believed.

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WE see here, that as *Christ* must be unfolded in Preaching, so He must be *believed on*. We must rest upon no other Thing, either in ourselves, or out of ourselves, but *Christ* only: And whole *Christ* must be received: For Believing is nothing but a Receiving of *Christ*, as a LORD and as a Saviour; as a Priest, to redeem us by his Blood; as a Prophet to teach us; and as a King, to govern us.

BUT what Manner of Faith do we see in most Men; that snatch out of *Christ* what they list, to serve their own Turn? As He died for their Sins, so they are glad of Him; but as He is a LORD, and King, to rule and govern them, so they will have none of Him; but, *turn the Grace of GOD into Wantonness*. But, as we must rest and rely on *Christ* only, so we must receive Him, and believe on Him wholly.

NOW, Faith looks upon *Christ*, as the main Object of it, as it justifieth; but the same Faith looks upon the whole Word of GOD, as Truth revealed: It believes all Divine Truths; all the Threatnings and Precepts of GOD. Faith chuseth not its Object, to believe what it lists; but it carries the Soul to all revealed Truths: But, when we speak of justifying Faith; then *Christ*, and the Promises, and the Mercy of GOD in *Christ*, is the first Thing, that the Soul looks unto.

CHRIST is the first Object of Faith, before any Benefit or Gift that we have from Him. We must receive *Christ*, before we have any Grace or Strength from Him: And a sanctified Soul looks first to *Christ*, to the Love of *Christ*, to the Person of *Christ*, and then to his Goods and Riches. As a Woman that is married, regards first the Person of
her

her Husband, and then looks to the Enjoyment of his Goods and Inheritance; so Faith looks to the Person first: It knits us to *Christ*, to be in Love with, and to embrace Him; and then it looks to all the good Things we have by Him: For He never comes alone; there is a World of good Things in Him; all that tends to Grace, and Glory.

THEREFORE, we that are Ministers of the Gospel, should especially look to unfold the Riches of *Christ*; and those that are GOD's People, should especially desire to have *Christ* unfolded, and the Riches of GOD's Love in *Christ*. The Soul that ever found the Sting of Sin, accounts nothing so sweet, as those Things that concern its Husband, and Saviour. A carnal Man loves to hear moral Points, but the Soul that understands itself, that ever felt in any Degree the Wrath of GOD, of all Points, desires to hear of *Christ*, and Him crucified. Therefore, we may judge by our Ears, of what Temper our Souls are; for, *the Ear tastes of Speeches, as the Mouth doth Meats.*

Now I shall shew how this is a Mystery; That *Christ* should be believed on in the World. Great is the *Mystery of Godliness*, *Christ believed on in the World.* To join these together, the World, and Believing, is almost as great a Mystery, as to join GOD and Man together: To bring an unbelieving, rebellious Heart and Believing together, is a great Mystery, in divers Considerations.

FIRST, If we consider what the World was; an Enemy to *Christ*; and being so, Slaves to *Satan*, Idolaters, in Love with their own Inventions, which Men naturally dote on. Here was the Wonder of GOD's Love, that He should vouchsafe it to such Wretches; That the World; that is, all Sorts
of

of the World, from the highest to the lowest, should at length be brought to stoop to the Cross of *Christ*.

It was a Mystery, that the World should believe; if we consider (besides their Greatness and Wisdom) the inward malicious Disposition of the World: Being in the strong Man's Possession, for these Men to believe the Gospel, surely it must needs be a great Mystery.

AGAIN, if we consider the Parties that carried the Gospel, whereby the World was subdued; a Company of unlearned Men, none of the deepest for Knowledge; (only they had the Holy Ghost, to teach and instruct them, which the World took no Notice of) Men of mean Condition, of mean Esteem, and few in Number. And these Men came not with Weapons, or outward Defence, but meerly with the Word, and with Sufferings. Their Weapons were nothing, but Patience and Preaching; offering the Word of *Christ* to Infidels, and suffering their Indignities. The World was not overcome by Fighting, but by Suffering: So the Lambs overcame the Lions, the Doves overcame the Birds of Prey, the Sheep overcame the Wolves: So Meanness overcame Greatness, Ignorance overcame Learning, Simplicity overcame Pride, Baseness overcame Glory.

AGAIN, if we consider the Truth they taught; being contrary to the Nature of Man, contrary to his Affections. What a Kind of Doctrine was this, to win such Entertainment in the World as it did? Such as made Men deny themselves, deny their Wits, their Wills, their Goods, their Lives: Therefore, in this Respect, it was a great Mystery, that *Christ* should be believed on in the World.

AGAIN,

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AGAIN, if we consider another Circumstance, it adds to the Mystery; that is, the Suddenness of the Conquest. In a short Time after *Christ*, one Man, *S. Paul*, spread the Gospel almost all the World over: He conquer'd almost all the World; He spread the Savour of the Gospel like Lightning, suddenly, and strongly; because there was an Almighty Power and Spirit accompanying the glorious Gospel: And thereupon it came to be thus effectual with the World.

THE next Thing I will touch, shall be, that Faith is put here for all Graces. In these six Clauses of this *great Mystery of Godliness*, there is only this one that is within us. *GOD manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached to the Gentiles, received up in Glory*; these are all without us: But this one, *believed on in the World*, that is only within us, and it is set down in stead of all: For it draws all other Graces after it; it enlivens and quickens the Soul; it is the Spring of spiritual Life in us; it is the first Grace of all. There are some Degrees of the Spirit, perhaps, before it, but all Graces have their Quickning from Faith; it infuseth supernatural Vigour into all the Parts and Powers of the Soul; and into all Graces whatsoever. Where *Christ* is *believed on in the World*, all follows; Love, Patience, Fortitude, and all other Graces come from Faith. Faith fetcheth spiritual Life from *Christ*; it insures to us all whatsoever is good, it knits us to the Spring of Life, *Christ*; it is the Grace of Union. Even as Satan, by Unbelief, did infuse all his Poison at the first; (for, by making our first Parents stagger at the Word of GOD, came Sin) so by Faith all Obedience comes; all have their Rising and Beginning from Faith.

LET us labour by all Means therefore to water this Root. When we would have Trees flourish, we pour Water on the Roots of them. Now the radical Grace in a Christian's Soul, is this Believing; this Relying upon *Christ*; a convincing Perswasion, that GOD and *Christ* are mine: This is the radical Grace of all other: Let us therefore water and cherish it by all Means whatsoever. And to this End, let us desire to hear much of *Christ*, of his Privileges, and Promises; for the more of *Christ* we know, the more we shall believe.

FAITH of Necessity requires Knowledge; therefore Knowledge is put for all other Graces. *This is eternal Life, to know Thee, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent*, Joh. xvii. 3. and because it is an Ingredient in all Graces, it is a main Ingredient in Faith. The more we know, the more we shall believe; *They that know thy Name, will trust in Thee*. Is it not so in human Affairs? The more we know a Man to be able, and loving, and faithful of his Word, the more we shall trust him. Is it not so in Divine Things? The more we know of *Christ*, of his Riches, and Truth; the more experimental Knowledge we have of Him, the more we shall trust Him. Therefore, by the Knowledge that is gotten by the Means, let us labour for an experimental Knowledge, that so we may trust and believe in Him more and more. Let us look to the Passages of our Lives in former Times, how gracious GOD hath been towards us; and let us search into the Depth of our own Wants and Weaknesses, and this will force us to grow in Faith more and more. The more we see of our own Inability, without *Christ*, the more we shall cleave to Him, and cast ourselves upon Him. Those that have the deepest Apprehensions of their own Wants and Weaknesses, usually have the deepest Appre-

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Apprehensions of *Christ*, and grow more and more rooted in Him. The Searching of our own Corruptions every Day, is a notable Means to grow in Faith; to consider what we are, if it were not for God's Mercy in *Christ*; and this will make us fly to the *City of Refuge*. A Search into our own Conscience, and Ways, will force us to live by Faith, and to exercise Faith every Day, in *Christ Jesus*.

AND this is to feed on *Christ* daily; to fly to *Christ*, when we are stung with Sin, and Hunger; in the Want of Grace, and Strength to fly to Him for Supply; and so to keep and encrease Faith. *Christ* is All in All to those, that hope to be saved by Him *Christ* is the Ground of our Life, our Comfort and Happiness: Therefore we should make to Him upon all Occasions, and cleave to Him in Life and Death. We cannot press this Point of Faith too much. Why are Christians called, Believers? Because Believing is all. If we can prove the Truth of our Faith, and Belief, we prove all; if we be faulty in that, all is bad: *Whatsoever is without Faith, is Sin*. All Mens natural Morality and Civility, are but Counterfeits; they are not enlivened by Faith in *Christ*. But I leave this, and come to the last Clause,

Received up into Glory.

THIS is the last Branch of this divine *Mystery of Godliness*, but it is none of the least. *Christ* ascended, if we respect Himself; He was received, if we look to his Father: Himself ascended, his Father received Him. The Apostle begins with, *God manifest in the Flesh*; there is the Descent: A great Mystery! for the great God to descend into the Womb of a Virgin; to descend to the lowest
Parts

Parts of the Earth! And then he ends with this, *Received up in Glory.* The Ascent is, from whence the Descent was. *Christ* ascended, and was received as high as the Place was whence He came down. GOD manifest in the Flesh, that is the Beginning of all; Received up to Glory, that is the Consummation of all. It implies his Exaltation, his Resurrection, his Ascension, his Sitting at the Right Hand of GOD, and his Coming to judge the Quick and the Dead; but especially it means his Glory after his Resurrection, his Ascension, and Sitting at the Right Hand of GOD.

GLORY implies an Exemption from that which is opposite, a base Condition; some great Eminency, and Excellency, and a Manifestation thereof. Tho' there be Excellency, if there be not a Manifestation of that Excellency, it is not Glory. *Christ* was inwardly glorious, while He was on Earth; He had true Glory, but there was not a Manifestation of it, and therefore it is not properly called Glory; there was not a Victory, and Subduing of all that was contrary to his Glory: for, He was abased, suffered and died. But after He was manifest in the Flesh, and had done the Work that He had to do, He was received up to Glory; that is, his Glory appearing, all Abasement vanished; He was victorious over that.

THE first Degree of *Christ's* Glory, was in his Resurrection. The Cloaths that He was bound with, were left in the Grave, the Stone was removed; all Things that might hinder his Glory, that might abase Him in Body, in Soul or Condition, were removed: There was an Excellency in all, that was not before, in Regard of Manifestation. For his Body; it was now an immortal, spiritual Body; it could suffer no longer; it was not

not fed with Meat and Drink; it was so nimble, that He could move even as He would Himself: So there was a Glory put upon his Body, above the Sun. There was a Glory upon the Soul; all that might hinder that, was subdued; for, there was no Sorrow, no Fear, no Grief, as there was in his Soul, before He was glorified: so both in Body and Soul He was more glorious. And then for his whole Condition, that was glorious; He was abased no longer; for, now He was taken into the highest Place of all, above the Heavens. And as his Place, so his Government is most eminent; for He is *above all Principalities and Powers, and is gloriously set down at the Right Hand of GOD.* All being subject to Him, He hath the Government of all.

No Person can be glorious, but either in Body or Soul, or Condition; *Christ* was glorious in all: For, He was received up into the Place of Glory, to Heaven, to the Assembly of Glory, to the Presence of his Father, and the blessed Saints and Angels; and no Question but there was a glorious Welcome. If the Angels came so chearfully to proclaim his Incarnation, when he was born and sang, *Glory be to GOD on High, on Earth Peace, good Will towards Men;* what Kind of Triumph, do you think, was made by all the blessed Company in Heaven, when He was received thither, after his Abasement?

AND that this is a Mystery, will easily appear: For was it a great Mystery, that GOD should take our Nature upon Him? Surely it must needs be a Mystery, that GOD will be glorified in our Nature. Was our Nature advanced in his Incarnation? Much more was it glorified in his Exaltation. Here was the Mystery of the Exaltation of our Nature:

ture: GOD was as much abased as He could be, being born, and dying for us; our human Nature was as much advanced as it could be, when GOD raised it up to Heaven: GOD could be no more abased, remaining GOD; and Man's Nature can be no more advanced, remaining the true Nature of Man.

IN this glorious Condition that *Christ* is received into, He fulfills all his Offices in a most comfortable Manner. He is a glorious Prophet, to send his Spirit to teach, and to open the Heart; He is a glorious Priest, to appear before GOD, in the Holy of Holies, in Heaven for us, forever; and He is a King there, forever, and from thence He rules his Church, and subdues his Enemies. So that, tho' He fulfilled those blessed Offices in the State of Humiliation on Earth, as it became that State to suffer for us; yet it was necessary that He should enter into Glory, to manifest that He was a King, Priest, and Prophet: For, He was not manifested who He was indeed, 'till He was received up in Glory. 'Till He ascended, we had not the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, sent from above, to apply, and to help us make Use of *Christ*, and all his Benefits and Riches; as it is said, *John vii. 39. The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* So that, in Regard of the Manifestation of *Christ's* Offices, and of the Application of all the Good we have by it, it is by *Christ* received up in Glory. To come to some Application.

FIRST, we must lay this for a Foundation of what follows, That *Christ* ascended as a publick Person: He must not be considered as a particular Person, but as the second *Adam*. As He took the Nature of Man, in his Incarnation; so He ascended into Heaven in it, as a publick Person. As the
first

first *Adam* was, so was *Christ*; and as in other Things, so in his Ascension to Glory.

IN the second Place, we must know, that there is a wondrous Nearness between *Christ* and us now: For, before we can think of any Comfort by the Glory of *Christ*, we must be one with Him by Faith; for, *He is the Saviour of his Body*: Therefore, we must be his Members; and being so, we are one with *Christ*. There is no Relation in the World that is able to express the Nearness between *Christ* and us; and therefore, when we speak of *Christ* ascended into Glory, we must needs think of ourselves, and of our Glory and Advancement. He was taken up to Glory in our Nature, not only for Himself, but for all his. As the Husband of the Church, he is gone before, to take up Heaven for his Spouse. As a Husband takes up Land in another Country for his Spouse, tho' she be not there; so *Christ* hath taken up Heaven for us: *I go before, to prepare a Place for you*. And likewise He is in Heaven as a glorious Head, ministring Virtue, Comfort and Strength to us. All our Power and Strength comes from *Christ* now, as our Head in Heaven.

AND, then we must consider *Christ*, not only as an efficient Cause, but as a Pattern, how we shall be glorified: For All is first in Him, and then in us. He was first abased, and so must we; and then He was glorified, and so shall we; we must be conformable to his Abasement, and then to his Glory: *He is the First Fruits of them that slept*; He being the First Fruits, we succeed. These Things being premised as Grounds, I come to make some Use of this comfortable Point.

WHEN we have to deal with GOD the Father, whom we have offended with our Sins; let us fetch Comfort, amidst all our Sins and Infirmities, from hence: *Christ* is ascended into Heaven, to appear before his Father, as a Mediator for us; and therefore, GOD turns away his Wrath from us: We have a Friend, a Favourite in the Court of Heaven; the Son of GOD Himself, at his Father's Right Hand, makes Intercession for us. And there is no Danger of his Death; for, *He is a Priest for ever at the Right Hand of GOD.* His very Presenting Himself in Heaven speaks for us: As if He should say; These Persons that ask in my Name, are such as I was born for, such as I died for, such as I was sent into the World to work the great Work of Redemption for. He wrought our Redemption in his abased Estate; but He applies it, as He is exalted: For that End He appears in Heaven for us, and pleads for us. For, even as there is a Speech attributed to *Abel's* Blood; it crying, *Vengeance, Vengeance:* So *Christ* appearing in Heaven for us, his Blood cries, *Mercy, Mercy:* These are those I shed my Blood for; *Mercy, LORD.* The very Appearing of Him that shed his Blood, cries for Mercy at the Throne of Mercy; which is therefore a Throne of Mercy, because He is there. He shed his Blood to satisfy Justice, to make Way for Mercy. Therefore, when we have to deal with GOD, think of *Christ* now glorious in Heaven, appearing for us. GOD can deny Him Nothing, nor deny us any Thing that we ask in his Name; we have his Promise for it.

THIS is a Ground likewise of Contentment in all Conditions, whatsoever our Wants be. What if we want Comforts on Earth, when we have Heaven provided for us? Shall not any Condition content a Man in this World, that hath such a glo-

glorious Condition to enter into? We should not so much as look up to Heaven, without Comfort: We should say, "Yonder is my Saviour, yonder is a House provided for me:" We should think and look upon Heaven as our own Place; whither *Christ* is gone before, and keeps a Room for us.

LIKEWISE, when we think of the Troubles of this World, of the Enemies we have here; think of *Christ* taken up to Glory, and think of *Christ's* Order; *first He suffered, and then He entered into Glory*: So we must be content to suffer first, and then be glorious. *Christ* entred into Glory in this Order, and shall we think to come to Heaven in another Order than *Christ* did? If we are in *Christ*, all that we suffer in this World, are Sufferings of Conformity, to make us suitable to our Head, and to fit us for Glory. And our greatest Abasements, what are they to the Abasement of *Christ*? None was ever so low, and there is none so high: As He was the lowest in Abasement, so He is the highest in Glory. When He was at the lowest, in the Grave; not only dead, but under the Kingdom of Death; then He rose gloriously, and ascended: So our lowest Abasements, are Fore-runners of our Advancement and Glory.

AND let this stir us up also, to stand for *Christ* and the Church, and not to be ashamed of Religion: *He is not ashamed to be called our Brother*; no, not after his Resurrection: *Go tell my Brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father*. He was not ashamed of it, when He began to be in the State of Glory; He is not ashamed of our Nature now, to take it up into Heaven; he is not ashamed to own us here, and at the Day of Judgment to set us at his Right Hand. And shall we for Fear of Men, for any earthly Respect, be ashamed of our glorious

ous Head? Do we believe that we have a Head that is glorious in Heaven, *sitting at the Right Hand of God*, that e're long will come to *judge the Quick and the Dead*; and shall we be ashamed, for a Scorn, for a Word, for a Frown? Where is the Spirit of Glory, the Spirit that should be in Christians, that hope to be glorious? *He that is ashamed of me here, (saith Christ) I will be ashamed of him at that Day.* How can we think, that *Christ* will own us, when we will not own his Religion here? When we are ashamed to stand for Him, shall we think to stand at his Right Hand? All base Spirits, that are afraid of Disgrace, of Displeasure, of Loss, of any Thing but of Him they should be afraid of; let them know, there is no Comfort for them in *Christ's* Exaltation: For, if they had any Communion with *Christ*, He would infuse another Manner of Spirit into them. Let us therefore stand for *Christ*; we have a glorious Head, a glorious Hope, a glorious Inheritance.

AND let us go on with Encouragement, in good Duties, with a Spirit of Faith: For, wherefore is *Christ* in Heaven, but to rule his Church by his Spirit; *To lead Captivity captive, and to give Gifts to Men?* Let us therefore go on with Confidence, that *Christ* in Heaven will give us his Spirit, to subdue our Corruptions. He is in Heaven, to rule his Church; and what is his Kingdom, but the Subduing of our Spirits by his Spirit, to be more humble, and more holy and gracious every Way? Let us not think, that our Corruptions will be too hard for us, but go on in a Spirit of Faith, that *Christ*, that died for us, as a Priest, will rule us, as a King. Let us not despair; tho' we carry Corruption about us, we shall overcome All. He will *lead Captivity captive*, and overcome all in us,

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as He did in his own Person. He that overcame for us, will overcome in us; if there be a Spirit of Faith to depend upon Him.

AGAIN: The Mystery of *Christ's* Glory tends to Godliness, to stir us up to Heavenly-mindedness. The Apostle doth divinely inforce this, *Colos. iii. 1. If ye be risen with Christ, seek the Things that are above.* From our Communion with *Christ*, rising and ascending into Heaven, and sitting there in Glory, he inforceth Heavenly-Mindedness; that our Thoughts should be where our Glory is, where our Head and Husband is; and certainly, there is Nothing in the World more strong, to inforce an heavenly Mind than this. *Christ*, our Head and Husband, is taken up into Glory; there is our Inheritance, there are a great many of our Brethren, there is our Country, there is our Happiness. We are for Heaven, and not for this World. This Life is but a Passage to that Glory, that *Christ* hath taken up for us; and therefore, why should we have our Minds groveling here upon Earth? Certainly, if we have Interest in *Christ*, who is in *Glory at the Right Hand of GOD*, it is impossible but our Souls will be raised to Heaven in our Affections, before we are there in our Bodies. All that are Christians, are in Heaven in their Spirit and Conversation before-hand: Our dull earthly Souls, being touched by his Spirit, ascend up. The Iron, when it is touched with the Loadstone, follows it, ascends up to it. If our Hearts were as heavy as Iron, if we have Communion with *Christ*, and have our Hearts once touched by his Spirit, this Meditation, that *Christ* our Head is in Glory, and that our Happiness is there, will purge and refine us from our Earthliness, and draw up our iron, heavy, cold Hearts to Heaven, whither *Christ* is ascended.

AND

AND it is not only Meditation of these Things, that will cause us to be heavenly-minded; but *Christ*, as a Head of Influence in Heaven, conveys spiritual Life, to draw us up: *When I am ascended, I will draw all Men after Me.* There is a Virtue from *Christ* that doth it; there is an Influence issuing from *Christ* our Head, to make us heavenly-minded indeed.

'To conclude All: As the Soul of Man is first sinful, and then sanctified; first humble, and then raised: So our Meditations of *Christ* must be in this Order; first, think of *Christ*, as abased and crucified; (for, the first Comfort that the Soul hath, is in *Christ manifested in the Flesh*, before it come to be *received up into Glory*.) Let us have Recourse to *Christ*, in the Womb of the Virgin; to *Christ* born, and lying in the Manger; going up and down, doing Good; hungering and thirsting, suffering in the Garden, sweating Water and Blood, nailed on the Cross, crying to his Father, *My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me!* finishing all upon the Cross, lying three Days in the Grave; and all for us, to expiate our Sin; to satisfy for our Disobedience; and then think of Him exalted to the Right Hand of GOD. Oh! here will be comfortable Thoughts for a wounded Soul, pierced with the Sense of Sin, assaulted by *Satan*: To think thus of *Christ*, abased for our Sins; and then, to think of Him taken up into Glory. I say, in this Order, we shall have comfortable Thoughts of *Christ*. But to think of his Glory in the first Place, would dazzle our Eyes: It would terrify us, being Sinners, to think first of his Glory, being now ascended; but when we think of Him as descended first, we can bear the Sight, and it will afford much Consolation. Who is this that is taken up in Glory? Is it not He that

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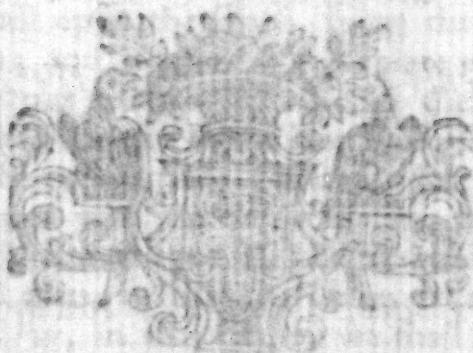
was manifest in our *Flesh* before? This will be comfortable. Therefore, let us first begin with *Christ's* Abasement, and then we shall have comfortable Thoughts of his Exaltation.

THESE Points are the main Grounds of Religion; having an Influence into our Lives and Conversations, above all others: Other Points have their Life and Vigour from these grand Mysteries, which are the Food of the Soul. Therefore, let us often feed our Thoughts with these Things of *Christ's* Abasement and Glory; considering Him in both, as a publick Person, the second *Adam*, and our Surety; and then labour to have Virtue from Him, fitting us in Body and Soul for such a Condition. The very Meditation of these Things, will put a Glory upon our Souls; and the Believing them, will transform us from Glory to Glory.



THE

1. The first of these is the fact that the
2. second is the fact that the
3. third is the fact that the
4. fourth is the fact that the
5. fifth is the fact that the
6. sixth is the fact that the
7. seventh is the fact that the
8. eighth is the fact that the
9. ninth is the fact that the
10. tenth is the fact that the

[illegible]

H H T and it will return to the Council.

 It says that it is taken up by the Council.



THE
NATIVITY of *CHRIST*,
Celebrated by ANGELS.



LUKE ii. 13, 14.

*And suddenly there was with the Angel, a
Multitude of the heavenly Host praising
God, and saying,*

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on
Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.*

THE Words are few and pregnant; very precious, having much Excellency in a little Quantity. The Heavens never opened but to great Purpose. When God opens his Mouth, it is for some special End; and when the Angels appeared, it was upon some extraordinary Occasion. This was the most glorious Apparition that ever

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ever was, setting aside that, which was at *Christ's* Baptism; when all the Trinity appeared; when the Heavens opened, and the Father spake, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the Likeness of a Dove, upon the Head of *Christ*. But there was never such an Apparition of Angels, as at this Time; and there was great Cause: For there was never such a Ground for it, whether we regard the Matter itself, the Incarnation of *Christ*, such a Thing as never was from the Beginning of the World, nor ever shall be in this World; for GOD took Man's Nature on Him, the Creator became a Creature: Or whether we regard the Benefit that comes to us thereby; for *Christ* by this Means brings GOD and Man together since the Fall.

CHRIST is the Accomplishment of all the Prophecies, of all the Promises; they were made in Him, and for Him; therefore He was the Expectation of the *Gentiles*. Before He was born, He was revealed by Degrees: First, generally, that He should be *The Seed of the Woman*; then more particularly to *Abraham*, that He should be his Seed; then He is limited to one Tribe, *Judah*, that He should come of that; then to one Family, the House of *David*: and then more particularly, *a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son*; then the Place is pointed out, *Bethlehem*; at last, when He came, *John Baptist* pointed Him out with the Finger, *Behold the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the Sins of the World*. Even as after Midnight, the Sun grows up by little and little, till his Beams strike forth in the Morning, and after appears in Glory; so it was with the *Sun of Righteousness*; as He came nearer, so He discovered Himself more gloriously by Degrees, till He was born indeed; and then you see a Multitude of Angels celebrate his Nativity.

Now

Now as before his Birth, He was revealed by Degrees; so after his Incarnation, He was revealed to all Sorts; to the Old, in *Simeon*; to Women, in *Anna*, a Prophetess; to wise Men, and to silly Shepherds; to all Ranks of Men: And to whomsoever the Incarnation of *Christ* was revealed, they all entertained it with Joy. The Angels sang, and praised GOD; *Simeon* was content then to die; *Zachary* breaks forth, *Blessed be the GOD of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed his People*; and the Shepherds went away rejoicing. And although *Christ* lay in the Manger; yet there were some Circumstances that shewed the Greatness of his Person: The wise Men came and adored Him, and an Host of Angels praised Him.

IN the former Part of these Words we may consider, 1. The Apparition of Angels. 2. To whom they appeared; poor Shepherds. And, 3. The End of their Appearing; to celebrate *Christ's* Birth.

Now in that the Angels appear'd, to poor simple Shepherds, rather than to great and honourable Men, we may learn, That GOD will confound the Pride of Men, that set so much by that which GOD so little respects. - And in that the Angels appeared to them in the Midst of their Business, *as they were keeping Watch over their Flock by Night*, we may observe, That GOD's People, (as *Moses*, and others) have had the sweetest Intercourse with GOD in their Affairs. We many Times meet with Comfort in our Callings, that otherwise we should never have. And in that they appeared to them in the Night; we may learn, that GOD discovers Himself in the Night of Affliction. Out sweetest and strongest Comforts are in our greatest Miseries.

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God's Children find Light in Darknes; nay,
God brings Light out of Darknes itself.

Now this glorious Apparition to the poor Shepherds, as it served to confirm their Faith then, so in them it serves to confirm ours now; for if one or two Witnesses confirm a Thing, what shall a Multitude do? If one or two Men confirm a Truth, much more an Host of heavenly Angels. Therefore it is base Infidelity to call this in Question, that is confirm'd by a Multitude of Angels. Again, such an Apparition must needs be an unspeakable Comfort to these poor Men, in their low Condition: From whence we may observe by the Way, that as for one Christian to confirm and comfort another, in the Ways of Religion, is the Work of an Angel; so for one Man to discourage another, is the Work of a Devil. I shall add no more here, concerning the Apparition, nor the Persons to whom it was made; but proceed to the End of the Angels Appearing, which was to celebrate the Birth of *Christ*. And here we will consider, First, The Celebration itself: *There was a Multitude of the heavenly Host, praising God.*

THE Word translated *Praising*, signifies also *Singing*. It implies Praise expressed in Singing. The Angels were joyful at the Birth of *Christ* their LORD. Joy is no Way better expressed, than in Praising God; and it is Pity, that such a sweet Affection as Joy, should run in any other Stream. God hath planted this Affection in the Creature, and it is fit He should reap the Fruit of his own Garden.

WE will next consider the Matter of their Celebration and Gratulation; which was this:

Glory

Glory to GOD in the Highest;

In earth Peace;

Good-will towards Men.

FIRST, the Angels begin with the chief End of all, the Glory of GOD; it is GOD's End, it was the Angels End, and it should be ours too. *Glory to GOD on high.* Then they wish the chief Good of all; that whereby we are fitted for this End; Peace. GOD cannot be glorified on Earth, unless there be Peace wrought: For Man else conceives GOD as an Enemy. By this Peace we are fitted to glorify GOD. If we find Reconciliation with GOD thro' *Jesus Christ*, then the Sense of GOD's Love, in the Work of Reconciliation, will inflame our Hearts to glorify GOD; therefore next to the Glory of GOD, they wish *Peace on Earth.* Then thirdly, here is the Ground of all Happiness, from whence this Peace comes, from GOD's Good-will, from his good Pleasure, *Good-will towards Men.* So if we go back again; the Good-will and Pleasure of GOD, is the Cause and Ground of Peace in *Christ*; and Peace in *Christ* puts us into a Condition, and stirs us up to glorify GOD. To begin with the first.

Glory to GOD in the Highest.

THE Angels, those blessed Spirits, begin with that which is the End of all. GOD's End in all Things, is his own Glory: He hath none above Himself, whose Glory to aim at. And the Angels wish, *Glory to GOD in the highest Heavens.* That is the Place where his Majesty most appears: And indeed He is more glorified there, than any where in the World. Many there are who do not glorify GOD at all, here on Earth. Many there are, whose whole Life is nothing but a Dishonouring of GOD. The best, in some Sense, cannot

perfectly glorify GOD, 'till they are in Heaven. And yet, in some Sort, we may glorify GOD more on Earth, than in Heaven. It may seem a Paradox, but it is true. Here upon Earth we glorify GOD in the Midst of Enemies: He hath no Enemies in Heaven; there all are of one Spirit. Here upon Earth, we live not only among Devils, but Men led with the Spirit of the Devil, where GOD is dishonour'd; and if here we take GOD's Side, and stand for GOD's Cause, we, in some Sort, honour GOD more here, than we are capable to do in Heaven, where there is no Opposition.

GOD is always glorious; but alas! few have Eyes to see it: But I take Glory here, for the Excellency and Eminency of the Goodness and Greatness of GOD discovered and taken Notice of. In the former Part of the Chapter, *Light* is called the *Glory of the LORD*. Light is a glorious Creature; Nothing expresseth Glory so much as that; it carries its Evidence in itself; it discovers all other Things, and itself too. So Excellency and Eminency will discover itself to those that have Eyes to see it, and being manifested and taken Notice of, is Glory.

IN that the Angels begin with the Glory of GOD, I might speak of this Doctrine; that *the Glory of GOD, the setting forth of the Excellencies and Eminencies of the LORD, should be the End of our Lives, the one Thing we should aim at.* The Angels here begin with it, and we begin with it in the LORD's Prayer; *Hallowed be thy Name!* But this being a general Point, I will pass it by, and come to the particular, in which it will more comfortably appear, as this Glory shines in *Christ*, in the Incarnation of *Christ*, there is Matter of glorifying GOD, both to Angels and Men.

I TAKE the Incarnation of *Christ*, as a Foundation of all the other Good we have by *Christ*. Glory to GOD on High, now *Christ* is born; why? Only that He is born? No; but by Reason of this Incarnation, there is a Union of the two Natures, GOD and Man; so that by the Incarnation now *Christ* is Man, and holy Man, the human Nature in *Christ* is pure and holy, being sanctified by the Spirit, and united to GOD. Now *Christ* being not only Man, but pure Man, and God-man, hence it is that He comes to be qualified for all that He did and suffered after; it was from hence that they had their Worth.

WELL then, the Incarnation of *Christ*, together with the Benefits thereof, such as Redemption, Adoption, and whatever else we gain thereby, is that wherein GOD will shew his Glory most. The Glory and Excellency of GOD doth most shine in his Love, and Mercy in *Christ*. Every Excellency of GOD hath its proper Place or Theatre, where it is seen; as his Power, in the Creation; his Wisdom in his Providence; his Justice in Hell; his Majesty in Heaven; but his Bowels of tender Mercy do most of all appear in his Church among his People; to whom He shews the Excellency of his Goodness in the Incarnation of *Christ*, and the Benefits we have by it.

MANY are the Attributes and Excellencies of GOD, that shine in *Christ*; as, his Truth: *All the Promises of GOD are, Yea, and Amen in Christ*; in Him there is an Accomplishment of all the Promises. His Wisdom in that He could reconcile Justice and Mercy, by joining two Natures together: That He could join two Attributes seeming contrary, Justice and Mercy. To reconcile Man, by reconciling Justice and Mercy; and by such an excellent Way, as that GOD should become Man;

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to reconcile Justice and Mercy, by such a Person, as should satisfy Justice, and give Way to Mercy, that is by *Christ*, this was great Wisdom. Likewise his Justice: Justice is fully satisfied in *Christ*. He became our Surety, who is GOD as well as Man. If no Creature can satisfy GOD, GOD can. The second Person in the Trinity took our Nature, and died for us: GOD must be satisfied; and when no Creature in Heaven or Earth can do it, his own Son must. Here was the Glory of his Justice. But the Main of all is, his Mercy and Goodness, which set Him on work, to contrive this great Work of Redemption, by the Incarnation and Death of *Christ*: His infinite rich, glorious, abundant Mercy, that is the main Thing wherein GOD is glorious now in *Christ*.

THERE are no Words large enough to set out the Goodness and Mercy of GOD in *Jesus Christ*. Therefore I will only speak of this Attribute, because this bears the Mastery among all the other. For after the Fall, Man being miserable and sinful, what Attribute can exalt itself, but Mercy to Misery, and Grace to sinful Man, in pardoning his Sin? Considering in what State Man stood after he had transgressed, there was no other Attribute could exalt itself, but Grace and Mercy, to triumph over Misery and Sin. Therefore Glory to GOD in the highest Heavens, especially for his free Grace and Mercy in *Christ*.

Now then reflect: Doth the Grace, and Love, and Mercy of GOD, appear, and shew themselves in *Jesus Christ*? I beseech you then, let us remember it, especially in the greatest Extremities; for it answereth all Objections, the greatest and strongest that can be made.

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THE Sinner will object, "My Sins are great, of long Continuance and of a deep Die." Look then upon GOD in *Christ*, and consider his End in the Incarnation of *Christ*; it was that his Mercy should be exalted, and triumph over all Man's Unworthiness. The greater thy Sins are, the greater will be the Glory of his Mercy in forgiving thee; and that is it GOD seeks for now, to be glorious in his Mercy.

AGAIN, thy Heart tells thee, That if there be any Mercy shewed to such a Wretch as thou art, it must be no ordinary Mercy. It is true, GOD's Mercy is no ordinary Thing; of all Attributes He will triumph in that. The Glory of his Mercy is, that He seeks to have of Men, by the Redemption wrought by *Christ*, above all Things whatsoever. What? Wouldst thou have infinite Mercy? Thou hast it in *Christ*. Perhaps thy Sins have abounded. GOD's Grace abounds much more, It may be thy Sins are as Mountains. GOD's Grace is as the Ocean, to cover those Mountains.

"BUT is it possible for GOD to forgive such a wretched Sinner as I, who have been a Blasphemer, an Adulterer, a Sabbath-Breaker, a Covetous, unjust Person, who have every Way broken all the Laws of GOD?" It were not with Men: But, saith GOD, *My Thoughts are not as your Thoughts*: my Thoughts are as far above yours, as the Heavens are above the Earth. Therefore bound not the infinite Mercy of GOD with thy narrow Thoughts, but let it have its Scope; especially in Plunges and Assaults; and in Times of Distress, such as the best of us may be brought unto, comfort yourselves with this Consideration, That GOD sets Himself to be glorious in his Love and Mercy, to poor, miserable, wretched Man, in *Jesus Christ*.
You

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YOU have heard now of the Joy of the Angels, of their Manner of celebrating the Birth of *Christ*: And if the Angels should now leave Heaven, and come down upon Earth, and take upon them Bodies, how would they celebrate the Incarnation of *Christ*?* You see here they sung, *Glory to God on High*; and this would be the Course wherein they would carry themselves to glorify GOD, answerable to their Song: So should we do, if we will be like the blessed Angels. We see how to celebrate the Nativity of *Christ*: We need not go to fetch Joy from Hell. If the Devil should be incarnate, and come to live among Men, he would celebrate the Incarnation of *Christ*, no otherwise than Men do in many Places. Then if we would not have our Portion with Devils, let us not imitate them. What? Hath GOD been so rich in Love to us, as to take our miserable Nature upon Him? Here is Matter of Joy: And shall we be beholding to the Devil for Joy, when we should rejoice for *Christ*? I desire Repentance and Reformation of what hath been amiss in this Kind: And if there be any that have been guilty, let them take it to Heart, and truly repent and amend their Ways.

CONSIDER the monstrous Ingratitude, the preposterous Behaviour of those who celebrate the Nativity of *Christ* in this brutish, devilish Manner. What? Because *Christ* was born, shall we therefore give Liberty to all Looseness, as if *Christ* came to bring Christians to Licentiousness? Shall we, instead of Repenting, run further and further into Guilt? Is that the Reasoning of the Scriptures? No; they say, *Repent, for the Kingdom of GOD is at Hand*; for *Christ* and the Fruits

* These Sermons were preached at the Feast of *Christ*'s Nativity.

of the Gospel are at Hand. *The Grace of God hath appeared in Christ*; what? To teach us to be more disordered than at other Times? Oh, no! to live soberly, justly and godly in this present World.

I SHALL next shew you; 1. How we may know, whether we glorify GOD for *Christ*, or no: 2. What are the Hindrances that keep us from it. And, 3. The Means how we may come to glorify GOD.

And first, in order to know whether we glorify GOD: Do we exalt GOD in our Souls, above all Creatures? Do we lift Him up in his own Place, and let Him be in our Souls, as He is in Himself, in the most Holy? Then we agree with the blessed Angels in giving Him Glory. GOD is glorious, especially in his Mercy and Goodness; let Him be so in our Hearts, above all our Unworthiness and Sin: For GOD hath not Glory from us, till we give Him the highest Place in our Love, and Joy and Delight. And this especially appears in Opposition of other Things, when we will not offend GOD for any Creature. Therefore let us ask our own Thoughts often; what that is, that our Delight, and Joy and Love, is spent on, and runs after? Is it the sweet Love of GOD in *Christ*, the excellent State we have in *Christ*? It is an excellent Sign. Let us examine what is highest in our Souls: *The Loving-Kindness of the LORD is better than Life itself*, saith the Psalmist. Then we give GOD Glory, when for his Sake, we set light by Life itself: When we are ready to part with all; with Father and Mother, and Houses and Lands, and all for *Christ*; then with the Angels we say, *Glory be to GOD on High!*

THEN

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THEN again, we give Glory to GOD for *Christ*, when we take all the Favours we have from GOD in *Christ*; when we see *Christ* in every Thing; *All Things are ours, because we are Christ's.* It is by *Christ* that we are Heirs, that we have any comfortable Interest in the Favour of GOD; therefore when we accept all in *Christ*, and give GOD in *Christ* the Glory of all, we give Glory to GOD.

AGAIN, we give Glory to GOD, when we all join together, and stir up one another, and labour to promote the Knowledge of GOD in *Christ*, all the Ways we can; when every one in our Place and Calling, Magistrates and Ministers, and every one in our Families, labour that *Christ* may rule there, that GOD in *Christ* may be known. Where there is a Zeal of GOD's Glory, and a Disposition to glorify GOD, there will be a Stirring up one of another; Angels stirring up Men, and Men Angels; and a Wishing, that GOD may have Glory in Heaven and Earth.

AGAIN, we glorify GOD in *Christ*, when we see such Mercy of *Christ*, as doth so transform us, that, from an inward Change, we have always a blessed Disposition to glorify GOD. This is the Difference between the Glas of the Gospel, and the Glas of the Law, and of the Creatures. In the Law, we see the Beams of the Justice of GOD, and the Beams of his Power and Goodness in the Creature; but it doth not change and transform us to be good and gracious: But when we see the Glory of GOD, of his Goodness and infinite Mercy, shining in the Face of *Jesus Christ*, it changeth the Soul, to be like unto *Christ*. Therefore, if we find, that the Knowledge of GOD in *Christ*, hath changed our Dispositions, it is a Sign then, we give Glory to GOD indeed.

To

To glorify GOD, being so excellent a Duty, let us consider, secondly, what are the main Hindrances that we give not GOD more Glory?

AND first, one main Hindrance, is a Vail of ignorance spread over our Heart, which hinders us from seeing the glorious Light of GOD, shining in *Jesus Christ*; and thereupon instead of that blessed Disposition that should be in the Soul, there comes an Admiration of, and a Delight in, base Things. This Ignorance is partly from the natural Darkness of our own Hearts; and sometimes from the Policy of *Satan*, who casts Dust in our Eyes, and labours that we may not see the Glory of GOD in the Gospel. It is then no Wonder, if where the Gospel is not preached, the Devil hath a Kind of Reign, and GOD is not honoured at all; because the Devil is the Prince of Darkness, and rules in Darkness.

ANOTHER great Hindrance is, Unbelief: This, like Ignorance, is another Vail overspreading the Heart: And though the Vail of Ignorance be remov'd, and a Man come to hear of the Mercy of GOD in *Christ Jesus*, and see so clearly the Scheme of Redemption, that he is able to discourse well upon it; yet not seeing it in a proper and spiritual Light, he believes it not with a proper and effectual Faith; so that there still remains a Vail of Unbelief upon his Heart: And one or other of these two Vails, or it may be both of them, is the Cause why we see not the Light of GOD, shining in the Gospel, and why we do not glorify Him. There are wondrous Things in the Gospel; but if we want either Light or Sight to see them, what doth it avail? If the Light shine round about us, and the God of this World hath blinded our Eyes, how can we glorify GOD? It cannot be, if we want a heavenly,

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venly, spiritual Light, suitable to the Things: For a natural Man, by the Light that he hath, cannot judge sufficiently of them. The main Hindrances then, of Glorifying God are, the Vail of Ignorance and Unbelief.

ANOTHER great Hindrance of Glorifying God is, when Men lift up their Sins above the Mercy of God in *Jesus Christ*. This is to take away God and *Christ* altogether: For if the Mercy and bountiful Goodness of God, were not greater than our Sins, it were not the Mercy and Bounty of a God. But there are but few of these that miscarry; God usually shines upon them at the last. There are three Ranks of Men; Some are prophane, dead, loose Christians, that were never under the Law; that never understood the Corruptions of Nature, nor themselves. Some again are brought from that, to understand themselves a little too much; that are under the Law, and feel the Flashes of God's Wrath. And some in the third Place, are brought from hence, to be under Grace. That is the only happy Condition, to be under the Grace of God in *Christ*. Some Men of the first Rank never come to the Second; they never understand what Sin is, and what the Wrath of God is; they will give their Conscience no Leisure to tell them what their Condition is; but if they come not to the Second Step, there is very small Hope of their coming to the Third: But there is Hope of the Second, that they will come to the third Rank. Now as those of the third Rank glorify God, by submitting their Sins to his Mercy in *Christ Jesus*; so the Second hinder God of much Glory, and themselves of much Comfort; (tho', as I said, few of them miscarry at last;) and the Third do not glorify God's Mercy in *Christ* at all.

Now,

Now, in the third Place, as a Means to attain to this Duty of Glorifying GOD; let us beg of Him the Spirit of Revelation, to discover to us the Things that make for our Peace, in their own proper Light; for they are spiritually discerned. Therefore the Apostle desires of GOD the Spirit of Wisdom, and Revelation to discover these Things to us; not only that they are Truths, but that they are Truths to us: For, unless we know these Things belong to *us* in particular, we cannot glorify GOD as we should. Oh! but when there is a Spirit of Appropriation to make these our own, that GOD in *Christ* loves us, *Who loved me, and gave Himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. then the Soul cannot but break forth, with the Angels here, *Glory to GOD on High*. Therefore beg the Spirit, to reveal to thee thy Part, That GOD is thy Saviour, and that thy Sins are forgiven: Beg of GOD to take away the Vails of Ignorance and Unbelief, and openly to reveal his fatherly Bowels, and tender Mercy to thee in *Christ*. It is the End of our Lives, and should be the Pitch of our Desires to glorify GOD: Therefore, I say, let us desire GOD to reveal Himself so far to us, to be our Father in *Christ*, that we may glorify Him. Surely it is a forcible Plea; GOD will do that that is suitable to his End; He *hath made all Things for his own Glory*; especially the Work of Redemption in *Christ*, is for the Glory of his rich Mercy, and we should desire the Sense of his Mercy and Love for this End, that we may be fitter to glorify GOD.

THIS is one excellent Way to help us to glorify GOD: For we cannot glorify Him, till we know we are at Peace with Him. And this was the End of the Angels in wishing Peace upon Earth; that GOD being reconciled, and Peace being established in Men's Consciences, they might glorify

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glorify GOD. The Reason of this will be more clearly seen in considering the second Part of the Angels Song: To which let us proceed.

Peace on Earth.

THE same holy Affection in the Angels, that moved them to wish GOD to have his Due of Glory from the Creature, moves them to wish Peace to Men likewise; because, as I just now observ'd, We cannot glorify GOD, 'till we have Knowledge of our Peace with Him in *Christ*.

“BUT why cannot we glorify GOD without this Knowledge?” The Reason is; Peace comes from Righteousness. *Christ* is first the King of Righteousness, and then King of Peace: Now, unless the Soul be assur'd of Righteousness in *Christ*, it can have no Peace. We cannot heartily wish for the Manifestation of the Glory of Him, that we think is our Enemy; the Heart of Man will never do it. Therefore GOD must first speak Peace to the Soul, and then we are fit to glorify GOD.

Now what is Peace? Peace, in general, is a Harmony and Agreement of different Things. Now the best Thing that Man can attain unto is, to have a Peace with his Creator. You may know what this Peace is by the Apostle, *Eph. i. 10*. The Word, *Ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*, there used, is very significant. It means to recapitulate, or gather all to a Head in *Christ*. Out of *Christ*, there is a Division, a Separation and a Scattering, a Breach, that is five-fold.

I. THERE is a Scattering and a Division from GOD, the Fountain of Good, with whom we had
Com-

Communion in our first Creation : His Delight was then in his Creature ; but we lost that blessed Communion, and our Sins have separated between GOD and us.

2. THERE is a Separation between the good Angels and us ; for they being good Subjects, take Part with their Prince, and therefore join against Rebels. Hence it is, that upon the Sight of Angels, the very Hearts of Men have been sometimes stricken, considering that there are no good Terms between us and the Angels, 'till we come to *Christ* again.

3. THERE is a Division and Scattering between Man and Man. Since the Fall there is a Spirit of Division among Men, 'till the Gospel again bring Peace ; especially there is no sound Peace between Men in the State of Nature, and others that are GOD's Children.

4. THERE is a Division and Separation between Man and the other Creatures. They are ready to be in Arms against any Man that is in the State of Nature. If GOD do but give them Leave, they presently make an End of sinful Men.

5. THEY have no Peace with themselves. They speak Peace to themselves ; but alas ! GOD speaks none to them. They make a Covenant with Death and Hell ; but Death and Hell make no Covenant with them. So it is a forced Peace ; it is a dead Sleep. They consider not themselves, and the War they are in with GOD, with the Angels, with other Men, with other Creatures, and with themselves. They suppose all is Peace ; whereas it is but a Truce that they take up for a Time : When GOD opens their Conscience, there is a Hell in

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their Hearts, that when let loose, makes them to suffer a Hell upon Earth; they enter into the Pains of Hell before their Time. So *there is no Peace to the Wicked* at all; but since the Fall, there is a Separation between GOD and Man, between Angels and Man, between Man and Man, between Man and the Creatures, between Man and himself.

Now, *Christ* at his Coming brings all into one again; He brings GOD and Man together again, by offering Himself a Sacrifice, by making full Satisfaction to the Justice of GOD; and Sin, which is the Cause of his Displeasure, being taken away, GOD being gracious and merciful, his Mercy runs amain on us. Sin only separates between GOD and us, and that *Christ* takes away; therefore He is called by *S. Paul*, *Christ our Peace*. And by *Isai-ah*, *The Prince of Peace*. He was qualified to be our Peace, as being a Friend to both Parties; having married our Nature on Purpose, that He might, in our Nature, bring GOD and us together.

If then we be at Peace with GOD, all other Peace will follow: For good Subjects will be at Peace with Rebels, when they are brought in Subjection to their King, and all join in one Obedience; therefore, by this Means, the Angels are brought to be at Peace with us.

AND as for Men, there is a Spirit of Union between them. The same Spirit that knits us to GOD by Faith, knits us to one another by Love.

AND we have Peace with the Creatures; for when GOD is made peaceful to us, He makes all other Things peaceable. The Heathen could say,

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Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia ; when GOD is at Peace, He makes all so.

AGAIN : Being at Peace with GOD, there is Peace in our Hearts. When we are assured by the Spirit of GOD, that He is our Father, and He seals it to our Conscience by his Spirit, (for the Blood of *Christ* is set on by the Spirit of GOD, and not by our own) Peace flows into our Hearts like a River. So that now GOD and we are brought to one, Angels and we, and all other Things and we are reconciled.

Now this blessed Peace, in all the Branches of it, is founded in *Christ* ; *Christ* is the Cause and the Foundation of it. For tho' these Words were spoken at the Incarnation of *Christ*, yet we are to refer them to the whole Work of his Mediatorship, in the State of his Abasement, and his State of Exaltation ; our Peace is wholly founded upon Him. He was born, and became Man, and became Sin ; that is, a Sacrifice for Sin for us ; He became a Curse for us, to establish a Peace, and to satisfy GOD's Anger ; and then He rose again, to shew that He had fully satisfied GOD's Anger, and that Peace was fully stablished : Therefore the Holy Ghost was sent after the Resurrection of *Christ*, as a Testimony, that GOD was appeased ; and now *Christ* is in Heaven, He is ever there as a Priest, to make Intercession for us : So that *Christ* is our Peace, from his Incarnation to his Death, from thence to his Resurrection and Ascension, and Intercession. All Peace with GOD, with Angels, and with Creatures, is stablished in *Christ*.

THIS should teach us, that whatsoever Inter-course we have with GOD the Father, we should take *Christ* with us. We must not offer Sacrifice

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without the High Priest: Let us offer Nothing to GOD without *Christ*. There is no Intercourse between GOD and us, 'till we be reconciled in *Christ*, in whom we must offer all our Sacrifices. Therefore let us not own an absolute GOD in our Devotions; but let us think of GOD reconciled in *Christ* and at Peace with us, and a Father in Covenant in *Christ*, and then our Persons and Prayers, and all shall be accepted. *Christ* is the true Mercy-seat; in looking to whom, GOD frees us from the Curse of the Law. *Jerusalem* was the Glory of the World, and the Temple was the Glory of *Jerusalem*, but the Mercy-seat was the Glory of the Temple, because that pointed to *Christ*, in whom we have Intercourse with GOD the Father.

BUT why doth he say, Peace on Earth? 1. Because Peace was wrought upon Earth by *Christ*, in the Days of his Flesh, when He offered Himself a Sacrifice of a sweet-smelling Savour to his Father. And, 2. Because here in Earth we must be Partakers of it. We oftentimes defer to make our Peace with GOD, from Time to Time, and think there will be Peace made in another World. Oh! Beloved, our Peace must be made on Earth. *We must live godly and righteously, and soberly in this present World, we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven here. Further Entrance must be ministred here, by growing in Grace daily.* If Heaven be not entred into here, it shall never be entred afterwards; for the Church is the Seminary of the heavenly Paradise. All that are taken to Heaven, to be set there for ever, are set in the Church, and grow up there a while, under the Means of Salvation. Therefore labour to have this Peace on Earth, or else you can never glorify GOD on Earth; and if we glorify Him not on Earth, we shall never do it in Heaven.

I would

I would now give a few Directions to maintain this Peace continually. To walk with GOD, and to keep our daily Peace with GOD, requires a great Deal of Watchfulness over our Thoughts, (for He is a Spirit) and over our Words and Actions. Watchfulness is the Preserver of Peace. Where there is a great Distance, between Two that are at Peace, it is not kept without Acknowledgement of that Distance, and without Watchfulness. It is not here as it is in a Peace that is between two Kings, that are coordinate one with another; but it is a Peace between the King of Heaven, and Rebels, that are taken to be Subjects; therefore we must walk in humble Terms. *Walk humbly with thy GOD.* We must watch over our Carriage, that we do not *grieve the Spirit of GOD*: For then, if the first Peace be not quite taken away, yet GOD interdicts our Comfort. If we do not watch against Sin, we cannot enjoy daily Peace; but GOD will suffer our Knowledge to lash our Conscience, and to make us more miserable, than a carnal Man, that never had a Sight of his Goodness. Oh! the Misery of a Man, that once had Peace, and is fallen again into ill Terms with GOD! Of all Men such a Man hath most Horror, 'till he hath made his Peace with GOD again.

AND because it is a difficult Thing to maintain Terms of Peace with GOD, in Regard of our Indisposition; we should renew our Covenant, and Purposes every Day. And if we have fallen into any Sin, let us make use of our great Peace-Maker, *Christ*; who is in Heaven to make Peace between GOD and us. Let us desire GOD for his Sake, to be reconciled unto us; for GOD is in *Christ*, reconciling us unto Him still. Let us desire Him, to testify it to us by his holy Spirit.

AGAIN,

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AGAIN, take that Direction of the Apostle, When we find any Trouble in the World, not to trouble ourselves over much. Cast your Care upon GOD. Let your Requests be made known to GOD with Thanksgiving. Pray for future Favours, and thank Him for past. Then *the Peace of GOD that passeth all Understanding shall keep your Hearts and Minds in Christ Jesus*. Perhaps we shall not have what we pray for; but if we have not that, we shall have the Peace of GOD, that passeth all Understanding.

AGAIN, if we would maintain this Peace, let us be always doing somewhat that is good, and pleasing to GOD. *Finally Brethren, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think of these Things; and then, the GOD of Peace shall be with you*. The Thoughts must be exercised that Way, and there must be a Practice of that we think of; and this will be a Means to maintain this Peace with GOD.

Now, to stir us up the more, to search the Grounds of our Peace: I beseech you, consider the fearful State of a Man, that hath not made his Peace with GOD. However *Christ* hath died, that will not serve the Turn, unless a Man take Him by Faith. If *Christ* be Food, and He be not eaten, if He be a Foundation, and we do not build on Him, what Benefit is it to us? Therefore, those that have not been brought by the Spirit of GOD, to communion with *Christ*, alas! they are under the Wrath of GOD; and however GOD doth use them, as Princes do Traitors in the Tower, giving them the Liberty of the Prison, yet the Sentence

of Death is not revoked. All the Delights of a Prisoner, do not content him; he knows he is on ill Terms with his Prince: So till we have made our Peace with GOD, alas! we have not sued out our Pardon; all our Delights are but as those of a Prisoner in the Tower. Therefore, ask thy Soul; Hast thou sued out thy Pardon? Is there Reconciliation wrought between GOD and thee?

IF we do not make our Peace with GOD, what a Case are we in? GOD Himself e're long, will appear our Enemy; *Christ*, who we think will save us, will be our Judge, and a terrible Judge; *If his Wrath be kindled, who shall abide it?* As for the Holy Ghost, how can they look for Comfort from Him? They have grieved Him; therefore He will grieve their Conscience: The Holy Ghost, as He is the GOD of all Comfort and Consolation, so He is the Ground of all Terror to wicked Men, when He hath knocked at their Hearts, by the Ministry of his Word to open, and to let Him in, but they would not. The Angels are ready Executioners of GOD's Vengeance, upon any Occasion: And other Creatures, wait but for a Command from GOD, to execute his Wrath upon Sinners. The Heavens are ready to rain upon them, as in the Flood; the Earth is ready to swallow them, as it did *Korah*; the Beasts that carry us, and all the Creatures we use, wait but for a Command from GOD to destroy us; our Meat to choak us, the Air to infect us, the Water to drown us, if we are at Variance with GOD. As for the Devils, they will be ready to be Tormentors of the Wicked. They that tempt to Sin now, will torment for it hereafter. And for the damn'd Spirits, they are all in that cursed Condition, with himself, therefore, *Where shall the Ungodly appear?* E're long whence shall he hope for Comfort? Neither from GOD, nor
Angels,

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Angels, nor Devils, nor wicked Men, nor good Men, none of them all will yield him Comfort. They are all ready to serve the LORD of Hosts against his Enemies.

INDEED, GOD shews his Patience here, but when GOD's Wrath comes, at the Day of Judgment; when GOD hath forsaken sinful Men; when GOD the Judge of all, hath said, *Depart ye Cursed*; no Creature shall minister them the least Comfort; the Sun shall shine upon them no more; the Earth shall bear them no longer; and as we see *Dives* had not a Drop of Water to comfort Him in those Flames, no more shall a miserable Wretch that comes into that Place of Torment. Therefore if we be not at Peace with the LORD of Hosts, every Creature is ready to be in Arms against us.

LET us not therefore delude ourselves, but get into *Christ*, get into the Ark in Time; that when any publick Calamity shall come, we may be safe in *Christ*. If we are at Peace with GOD, by Faith in *Christ*, every Thing will minister Comfort to us; we cannot think of GOD, but as our Father; of *Christ* but as our Redeemer, and Reconciler, that hath brought GOD, and us together; the Holy Ghost takes upon Him the Term of a Comforter for such; Angels are ministring Spirits: As for the Church itself, GOD's People, they have a common Stock of Prayers for us; every one that saith, *Our Father*, thinks of us; and for all other Things, they are at Peace with us; as *Job* saith, *The Stones in the Street*, nay, the Stone in a Man's Body, the terrible Pangs that come from that Disease, they have a Blessing upon them; in the greatest Extremities, a Soul that is at Peace with GOD, however GOD does not deliver him from the Trouble, yet He delivers and supports him in the Trouble; and

as the Troubles increase, so his Comforts increase; and the very Troubles themselves are Peace with him; all work for the best *to them that love God*. And in the greatest Confusions and Tumults of States, *the Righteous is afraid of no ill Tidings*, Psal. cxii. Because his Heart is fix'd upon God's Love in *Christ*: While the Wicked, when War and Desolation, and Signs of God's Anger appear from Heaven, *shake as the Trees of the Forest*.

WHEN Death comes, then is the Upshot of all. Oh! the Miseries of a Man, in the evil Day, that hath not made his Peace with GOD! While to the Godly, the Sting of Death is taken away. He that hath made his Peace with GOD, can say with old *Simeon*, LORD, *now let thy Servant depart in Peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation*. He is willing to yield his Soul to GOD, because he is at Peace with Him. Their Graves are their Beds, and their Souls rest with Him. They die in Peace, and commend their Souls to GOD, *as to a faithful Creator*; as S. Paul saith, *I have fought the good Fight, I have kept the Faith; henceforth is reserved for me a Crown of Righteousness; and not for me only, but for all those that love his Appearing*. Oh! the Comfort of him in the Hour of Death, that hath made his Peace with GOD! *Blessed are those that die in the LORD, in the Peace of the LORD, They rest from their Labours*.

AND after Death, what Comfort are those in, that have made their Peace with GOD in *Christ*? The Godly have comfortable Thoughts of those blessed Times to come. They cannot think of Death and Judgment, without much Comfort. *Lift up your Heads, for your Redemption draws near*. Therefore let us not conceive slightly of this Peace. It is not a Freedom from petty Ills, and an Advancement to a little Good; but it is a

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Freedom from Ills, that are above Nature; from the Wrath of GOD, before which no Creature can stand, no, not the Angels themselves; from Hell and Damnation; from the Curse of GOD, and from the Kingdom of *Satan*: It is a Freedom from that Condition, that all the Powers of the World shall tremble at, and an Advancement to the greatest Good: It is a Freedom from Bondage, and an Advancement to Son-ship. Therefore let us have high Thoughts of this Peace, as the Angels had, when they sang, *Glory to GOD on High, on Earth Peace,*

Good-will towards Men.

THIS is the Spring and Root of all. The Angels begin with, *Glory to GOD*, and then they come to *Peace among Men*. Now there is no Peace, but issues from Grace; Grace is GOD's free Good-will and Pleasure; therefore the Angels say, *Good-will towards Men.*

WE may learn hence, 1. That GOD hath now a gracious Good-will towards Men. 2. That this Good-will, is the Foundation of all Good. 3. That this is founded upon *Christ*.

1. GOD now shews good Pleasure towards Men. I speak of this, but as it makes Way for the other: Only by the Way I shall observe, That the Love that GOD bears towards Man, as it is a Propension in Him to do Good, is *Love*: As it is free, it is his *good Pleasure* or *Grace*; as it is to Persons in Misery, it is *Mercy*. The Foundation of all is Love; but the Terms differ according to Circumstances: Good Pleasure and Grace imply Freedom in the Party loving; and Mercy implies Misery in the Party loved. Now this free Good-will and Grace, is towards Men: He saith not, towards Angels.

Angels. It is more towards Men, than even to good Angels (in some Sort;) for Man is taken to be the Spouse of *Christ*, good Angels are not so: Neither is it Good-will to evil Angels; for their State is determined; there is no altering of their Condition.

2. This good Will of GOD to restore lapsed Man, by the Sending his Son, is the Ground of all Good to Man, and hath no Ground but itself.

GOD's Grace and Love to the Creature, is altogether independent, in Regard to the Creature; GOD fetcheth not Reasons of his Love from that, but from his own Bowels. What is the Foundation of the Covenant of Grace? *Christ*. GOD *so loved the World, that He gave his only Son*. There is Nothing freer than a Gift, *Christ* is a Gift; He came freely from GOD, who gave *Him to Death for us all*.

AND whatsoever good Thing we have in *Christ*, it comes freely too. He that gave *Christ* freely, *shall He not also with Him freely give us all Things?* The very Grace to keep the Covenant, Repentance and Faith, they are the free Gift of GOD. *I will take away your stony Heart, and give you new Hearts, and cause you to walk in my Statutes*. GOD doth his Part, and ours too, to shew not only, that the Covenant of Grace is a Covenant of wondrous Love, to give us Grace here, and Glory hereafter; but that the Foundation is of Grace, and that the Performance on our Part is of Grace likewise: Nay, it is of Grace, that He would enter into Covenant at all: He humbled Himself wondrously, in vouchsafing to enter into Covenant; it was Humiliation on GOD's Part, and Exaltation to us; therefore, as it is in *Zachariah*, we may cry,

Grace, Grace! There is Nothing but Grace, and free Love, in the whole Carriage of our Salvation.

BUT if whatsoever Good come to Man, be merely from GOD's Good-will, let us empty ourselves, and give Him the Glory of all. It is easily spoken and heard, but not so easily done; for Man naturally is proud; and for Flesh and Blood, to be brought to go out of itself, to give the Glory of all Goodness, and Happiness to GOD's free Grace, is hard to proud Nature. But we must beg Grace of GOD, to work our Hearts to this, more and more to empty ourselves of ourselves, and to give GOD the Glory of all: But,

3. THIS free Love and Grace of GOD, is only in *Christ*: Therefore the Angels pronounce at the Birth of *Christ*, Good-will to Men. What we have by Grace, we have only by *Christ*; (because He hath given Satisfaction to GOD's Justice, that so Grace may be conveyed, and derived unto us without any Prejudice to any other Attribute in GOD;) and the embracing Power and Grace in us is Faith. I say, whatsoever we have from GOD's free Love, we have it in *Christ*. The free Love of GOD is grounded in *Christ*. GOD cannot look upon us, but in Him; therefore all is *Christ*. We are called in *Christ*, justified in *Christ*, sanctified by the Spirit of *Christ*, glorified by *Christ*: *We are blessed with all Spiritual Blessings, in heavenly Things in Christ.*

THE whole Trinity have a wondrous Complacency in looking upon Mankind: GOD loves us, as redeemed by *Christ*; *Christ* loves us, as given by the Father to Him to redeem; the Holy Ghost hath a special Liking to us, as seeing the Love of the Father in giving us, and of the Son in redeeming us.

us. And surely it should be our chief Delight too, to see how GOD hath given us to *Christ* to save; how *Christ* hath redeemed us; and how the Holy Ghost witnesseth this Love to our Souls, and applies it to us.

THE first use we shall make of what hath been said, shall be to observe, that all that are not in *Christ*, lie open to the Vengeance, and Wrath of GOD.

AGAIN, if all GOD's Good-will and Pleasure, be in *Christ*, as our high Priest, without Whom we can offer no Sacrifice, then we should look to GOD in *Christ*, love GOD in *Christ*, perform Service to GOD in *Christ*, pray to GOD in *Christ*, give Thanks to GOD in *Christ*, desire GOD in *Christ* to make all Things acceptable for *Christ*'s Sake, because it is in *Christ*, that GOD hath any Good-will and Pleasure to us.

BUT how shall we know whether GOD's Good-will be to us in *Christ*, or no? How shall I know that I am in the State of Grace? The Holy Ghost must ascertain this: For as the Work of Salvation was so great, that only GOD could satisfy GOD; so the Doubts of Man's Heart, and the Guilt of his Conscience, when it is upon him, and the Fear of GOD's Wrath, upon such Guilt, is such, that GOD must assure him, that He is reconciled to him; GOD the Son must reconcile GOD the Father; and GOD the Holy Ghost must seal and ascertain this to the Soul. The Soul will never be quiet, before it see and know in particular, GOD reconciled in *Christ*; the Spirit, that is GOD, that is above Conscience, must seal it to the Soul: Being above Conscience, he can quiet our Conscience.

Now this Spirit that worketh this in us, and assures us of GOD's good Pleasure, alters and changes our Dispositions, that we shall have a good Pleasure in GOD: (For there is a mutual good Pleasure; GOD hath a Pleasure in us as his, and we have a good Pleasure in GOD, wrought by the Spirit;) the Spirit not only witnesseth, but worketh this sweet and gracious Disposition to GOD; GOD delights in us, and we in GOD. GOD delights in the Church above all Things; the Church is his Spouse, his Body, his Friends, his Children; and those that have the Spirit of GOD, delight in them too. *My delight is in the Sons of Men, saith Christ;* which He shewed, by taking the Nature of Man upon Him: So all that have the Spirit of *Christ*, delight in the Church and People of GOD.

GOD delights in Obedience, more than Sacrifice: GOD's People that He delights in, yield their Bodies and Souls a Sacrifice to GOD: GOD accepts them in *Christ*, and He is acceptable to them in *Christ Jesus*, and they seek out what pleaseth Him, and is acceptable to Him: As the Sons of *Isaac*, sought out what might please their old Father, so GOD's Children seek out what Duties GOD relieth best. Thanksgiving is a Sacrifice, with which GOD is well pleased: Is it so? Then they will seek out, that that may please Him. GOD by his Spirit, will work in them a Disposition, to please Him in all Things; therefore the People of GOD, are said to be a free People, zealous of good Works. The Spirit infusing the Love of GOD in *Christ* to them, sets their Wills at Liberty, to devise to please GOD in all Things.

THEREFORE, if we have tasted GOD's Goodwill towards us, we have a good Pleasure to Him again. Whatsoever is GOD's Pleasure shall be our Pleasure.

Pleasure; what pleaseth Him, shall please us. If it please Him to exercise me with Crosses, and Afflictions; what pleaseth GOD shall please me; for when He hath once loved me freely in *Christ*, every Thing that comes from Him, tastes of that free Love and Mercy; all the *Ways of GOD are Mercy and Truth*. His Way of Correction is a Way of Love; therefore, if it please Him, it shall please me; my Will shall be his.

BUT if we do not find ourselves yet to be the People of GOD's Delight, what shall we do? Attend upon the Means of Salvation, the Gospel of Peace, and wait the good Time, and do not stand disputing. Disputing and Cavilling hinders many; therefore leave Disputing, and fall to Obeying. GOD hath a gracious Purpose, to save all that repent of their Sins, and believe in *Christ*: This is Gospel. *I will leave secret Things, for they belong to GOD; revealed Things only belong to Me*. I will desire of GOD his Spirit, to repent of my Sins, and to cast myself into the Arms of his Mercy in *Christ*, and then let GOD do as He please: If I perish, I will perish in the Arms of *Christ*.

IF thou doubtest, whether GOD love thee or no; cast thyself upon the Love of GOD in *Christ*, and then it is out of Question. Whosoever hath Grace to cast himself upon the free Love of GOD, he fulfills the Covenant of Grace. Stand not disputing and wrangling, but desire Grace to obey, and then all Questions concerning thy eternal Estate are resolved; all is clear.

THERE is not the worst Man, but would have pardoning Mercy; he is content to have GOD pardon his Sin; but he will not take the whole Mercy, and Love of GOD in *Christ*; curing, healing Mercy. Men will have one Mercy, but not another

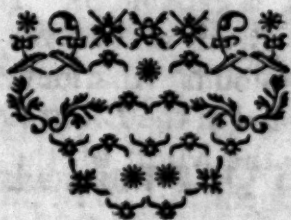
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ther; but we shall never be saved without entire Mercy; Healing as well as Pardoning. GOD doth not only pardon the Sins of those, whom He loves, but He heals their Nature, and makes it like unto *Christ's*, holy and pure.

THOSE that have not the Spirit, who desire not altering, changing and healing Grace, as well as pardoning Grace, they are Hypocrites. Let us remember this especially; because most Men are deceived in this; they think, "Oh! GOD is merciful, and his Love is free in *Christ*; and though I am unworthy, yet GOD will have Mercy upon me!" But hast thou a secret Desire, to partake of GOD's whole Mercy, to make thee Good, as well as to make thee his Son, and entitle thee to Heaven? To have thy Nature altered? To see the Deformity of Sin, and the Beauty of Grace? Hadst thou rather have the Image of GOD upon thee, than any Favour in the World beside? Hadst thou rather be freed from the Bondage of Sin, than have any other Deliverance? If it be thus, there is good Hope concerning thee: If otherwise, thy Case is dangerous; and thou art but an Hypocrite, deceiving thy own Soul.

To conclude all: The Love of GOD is a Love that reacheth to the Filling of Nature, with all the Happiness it is capable of. In this World, in all Misery, one Beam of GOD's Loving-kindness will scatter all Clouds whatsoever. What raised the Spirit of *Daniel* in the Lions Den? Of the three young Men in the Midst of the Furnace? Of *S. Paul* in the Dungeon? The Beams of GOD's Love in *Christ*, brake into the Prison, into the Furnace, into the Dungeon. A few Beams of that will enlarge the Heart more, than any Affliction in the World can cast it down. That is excellent
which

which *Moses* saith, *Deut.* xxxii. 16. where after recounting the many Blessings of *Joseph*, he closes all with the chief and Spring of all the Rest, *The good Pleasure of Him that dwelt in the Bush.* You know that GOD appeared in the Bush, when it was flaming. The flaming Bush shewed the State of *Israel*, in the Midst of the Furnace of Persecution: The Bush, tho' burning, was not consumed: Why? Because the Good-will of GOD was in the Bush. So let us be in any Persecution, or like *Moses's* Bush, all on Fire, yet the Fire shall not consume nor hurt us: Why? The good Pleasure of Him that dwelt in the Bush is with us. *I will be with thee in the Fire, and in the Water*, said GOD; not to keep thee out, but I will be with thee in it: So that in the greatest Persecutions that can be, the Good-will of Him that dwelt in the Bush will be with us; so that we shall not be consumed, tho' we be in the Fire; tho' we be afflicted, we shall not despair: Why? The good Pleasure of GOD dwells in the Bush, in the Church. In the Midst of Afflictions and Persecutions, He is with us. Who can be miserable, that hath the Presence of GOD, the Favour and good Will of GOD?



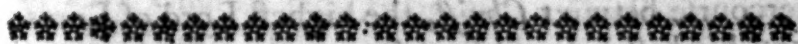


A DISCOVERY

Of the near UNION and COMMUNION betwixt
CHRIST and the CHURCH,

And consequently betwixt HIM and every BELIEVING SOUL,
Delivered in divers SERMONS

On the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of the
CANTICLES.



CANT. V. 1, &c.
*I am come into my Garden, my Sister, my
Spouse: I have eaten my Honey-comb
with my Honey: I have drunk my Wine
with my Milk: Eat O Friends, drink,
yea drink abundantly, O Beloved!*

OTHER Books of SOLOMON lie more obvious
and open to common Understanding; but as
none enter'd into the Holy of Holies, but the High-
Priest;

Priest; so none can enter into the Mystery of this Song of Songs, but such as have Communion with *Christ*.

SONGS, and especially Marriage-Songs, serve to express Mens own Joys, and the Praises of others. So this Book contains the mutual Joys and mutual Praises betwixt *Christ* and his Church. And as *Christ* and his Church are the greatest Persons that partake of human Nature, so whatsoever is excellent in the whole World, is borrowed to set out the Excellencies of these two great Lovers.

It is called *Solomon's* Song, who, next unto *Christ*, was the greatest Son of Wisdom that ever the Church bred: But in this Argument there is no Danger for the deepest Wit to over-reach; for the Knowledge of the Love of *Christ* to his Church is above all Knowledge. The Angels themselves may admire it, tho' they cannot comprehend it. It may well therefore be called the Song of *Solomon*; the most excellent Song, of a Man of the deepest Apprehension, and of the highest Matters, the Intercourse betwixt *Christ*, the highest Lord of Lords, and his best beloved Spouse.

THERE are divers Things in this Song, at which a corrupt Heart, (unto which all Things are defiled) may take Offence; but *to the Pure all Things are pure*. Such a sinful Abuse of this heavenly Book, is far from the Intention of the Holy Ghost in it, which is, by stooping low to us, to raise us higher unto Him; that by taking Advantage of the sweetest Passage of our Life (Marriage), and the most delightful Affection (Love), in the sweetest Manner of Expression (a Song), He might carry up the Soul to Things of a heavenly Nature.

As

As amongst other Ways of Mortification, there are two remarkable ones; 1. By imbittering all earthly Things unto us, whereby the Affections are deadned to them. And, 2. By shewing more excellent Objects; that the Soul issuing more largely and strongly into them, may die unto other Things: So the holy Spirit hath chosen this Way in this Song, by elevating our Love, to take it off from other Things, that so it might run in its right Channel.

SOME think this Song contains a Story of the Church in several Ages: But howsoever that be, it hinders not, but that most Passages of it agree to the spiritual State of the Church in every Age.

In this Song there is,

1. A STRONG Desire of the Church of nearer Communion with *Christ*; and then,
2. SOME Declining in Affection.
3. AFTER this we have her Recovery of Love; after which,
4. THE Church falls again into a Declining of Affection, whereupon follows a further Strangeness of *Christ* to her; which continues until,
5. THE Church perceiving *Christ*'s constant Affection unto her, notwithstanding her unkind Dealing, recovers and cleaves faster to *Christ* than ever before. *Chap. iii.*

THESE Passages agree to the Experience of all Christians. And this Observation must carry Strength through this whole Song, that there is the same Regard of the whole Church, and of every particular Member, in Respect of the chief Privileges and Graces that accompany Salvation. And as the whole Church is the Spouse of *Christ*, so is every

every particular Christian: And as the whole Church desires still nearer Communion with *Christ*, so doth every particular Member.

BEFORE I come to treat of the Words here chosen, I shall observe to you, that this Chapter is not so well divided from the former, as it might have been; for it were better, that the last Verse of the former Chapter were added to the Beginning of this. And therefore by Reason of the Connection of the one with the other, I will first speak somewhat of that Verse, to make Way for that which follows.

Awake, O North-wind, and come thou South, blow upon my Garden, that the Spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into his Garden, and eat his pleasant Fruits. Cant. iv. 16.

THE Words contain, 1. A Turning of *Christ*'s Speech to the Winds to blow upon his Garden. With the End why; *That the Spices thereof may flow out.* 2. We have an Invitation of *Christ* by the Church to come into his Garden: With the End; *To eat his pleasant Fruits.*

It may be a Question, whether this Command be the Words of *Christ*, or the Desire of his Spouse. But it is certain, the Words are spoken by *Christ*, because He calls it, *My Garden*; and the Church afterwards invites Him to eat of *HIS pleasant Fruit*, not *HER'S*: And yet the Words may be likewise, an Answer to a former secret Desire of the Church.

THE Order is this: The Church being sensible of some Deadness of Spirit, secretly desires some further Quickning. *Christ* then answers those Desires, by commanding the Winds to blow upon her.

her. For, ordinarily *Christ* first stirs up Desires, and then answers the Desires of his own Spirit.

FOR the first Point named, we see here, that *Christ* sends forth his Spirit, with Command to all Means, under the Name of North and South Wind, to further the Fruitfulness of his Church. The Wind is Nature's Fan. What the Winds are to the Garden, that the Spirit of *Christ*, in the Use of Means, is to the Soul.

FROM *Christ's* commanding the Winds, we may in general observe, that all Creatures stand in Obedience to *Christ*, as ready at a Word, whensoever he speaks to them. They are all, as it were, asleep until He awakes them. He can call for the Wind out of his Treasures when He pleases; He holds them in his Fist. Which may comfort all those that are *Christ's*, that they are under one that hath all Creatures at his Beck to do them Service, and at his Check to do them no Harm. This drew the Disciples in Admiration to say; *What Manner of Man is this, that even the Winds and the Seas obey Him!* And cannot the same Power still the Winds and Waves of the Churches and States, and cause a sudden Calm, if (as the Disciples) we awake Him with our Prayers.

AGAIN: In that *Christ* speaks to Winds, contrary one to another, both in Regard of the Coasts from whence they blow, and in their Quality; yet both of which are necessary for the Garden; we see, that the Courses that *Christ* takes, and the Means that He useth with his Church, may seem contrary, but by a wise Ordering all agree in the wholesome Issue. A prosperous and an afflicted Condition are contrary; a mild and a sharp Course seem to cross one another; yet they sweetly agree

in this, That as the Church needeth both, so *Christ* uses both for the Church's Good. The North is a nipping Wind, and the South a cherishing Wind; therefore the South-Wind is the welcomer after the North-Wind hath blown. But howsoever, all Things are ours, *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or Life or Death, or Things present, or Things to come.* 1 Cor. iii. 21. *All Things work together for Good to us, being in Christ.*

HENCE it is, that the manifold Wisdom of *Christ* maketh Use of such Variety of Conditions; and hence it is, that the Spirit of *Christ* is mild in some Men's Ministries, and sharp in others. Nay, both mild and sharp in the very same Minister, as the State of the Soul they have to deal withall requires.

SOMETIMES again, the People of GOD need Purging, and sometimes Refreshing: Whereupon the Spirit of GOD carries itself suitably to both Conditions: And the Spirit in the Godly themselves draws Good out of every Condition: Sure they are, that all Winds blow them Good; and were it not for their Good, no Winds should blow upon them. But as these Times of ours, by long Peace and Plenty, grow cold, heavy and secure, we need all Kinds of Winds to blow upon us, and all little enough. Time was when we were more quick and lively; but now the Heat of our Spirits is abated: We must therefore take Heed of it, and quicken those Things that are ready to die; or else instead of the North and South Wind, GOD will send an East Wind that shall dry up all.

AGAIN, if *Christ* can bind up, or let loose all Kind of Winds at his Pleasure, we should remember, that if Means be wanting or fruitless, *It is He*
that

that says to the Clouds, drop not; and to the Winds, blow not: Therefore we must acknowledge Him in Want or Plenty of Means. The Spirit of *Christ* in the Use of Means is a free Agent; sometimes it blows strongly, sometimes more mildly, sometimes not at all. No Creature hath these Winds in a Bag at Command; and therefore it is Wisdom to yield to the Gales of the Spirit.

FOR the clear Understanding of what we are to speak of, let us observe, 1. Why the Spirit of God in the Use of the Means is compared to Wind. And then, 2. Why the Church is compared to a Garden.

THE Spirit of GOD is compared to Wind, in Respect, 1. That as *the Wind bloweth where it listeth*; so the Spirit of GOD blows freely. 2. That as the Wind (especially the North-Wind) hath a cleansing Force; so the Spirit of GOD purgeth our Hearts from dead Works to serve the Living GOD. 3. That as the Wind disperseth and scattereth Clouds, and makes a Serenity in the Air; so doth the Spirit disperse such Clouds, as Corruption and *Satan* raise up in the Soul, that we may clearly see the Face of GOD in *Jesus Christ*. 4. That as the Wind hath a cooling and a tempering Quality, and tempers the Distemper of Nature, (as in some hot Countries there are yearly Winds, which blow in Summer, tempering the Heat); so the Spirit of GOD allayeth the Heats of fiery Temptations, and bringeth the Soul into a good Temper. 5. That as the Wind being subtil searcheth into every Corner; so the Spirit is of a searching Nature, and discerneth betwixt the Joints and the Marrow, betwixt the Flesh and the Spirit; searching those hidden Corruptions, that Nature could never have found out. 6. That as the Wind again bears

down all before it, beats down Houses and Trees, like the Cedars in *Lebanon*, turns them up by the Roots, and lays all flat; so the Spirit is mighty in Operation; there is no standing before it: It brings down Mountains, and every high Thing that exalts itself, and lays them level: Nay, the *Roman*, and those other mighty Empires, could not stand before it.

OBSERVE here the Order of Things one under another: To the prospering of a Flower or Plant in a Garden, not only Soil is needful, but Air and Wind also, and the Influence of Heaven; and God commanding all, as here, *the Winds to blow upon his Garden*. So in Spiritual Things there is a Chain of Causes and Effects: Prayer comes from Faith, *Rom. x. 14*. Faith from the Hearing of the Word; Hearing from a Preacher, by whom God by his Spirit blows upon the Heart; and a Preacher from God's Sending. And if the God of Nature should but take away one Link of Nature's Chain, the whole Frame would be disturbed.

WELL! That which *Christ* commands here, is, for the Winds to blow upon his Garden. And we need Blowing, our Spirits will be becalmed else; and *Satan* will be sure by himself, and such as are his Bellows, to blow up the Seeds of sinful Lusts in us. For, there are two Spirits in the Church; the one always blowing against the other. Therefore the best had need to be stirred up; otherwise, with *Moses*, their Hands will fall down.

Now we need Blowing:

1. IN REGARD of our Natural Inability.
2. IN REGARD of our Dullness and Heaviness cleaving to Nature occasionally.

3. IN

3. IN REGARD of contrary Winds from without: For *Satan* hath his Bellows filled with his Spirit; that hinder the Work of Grace all they can; so that we need not only *Christ's* Blowing, but also his Stopping other contrary Winds that they blow not, *Rev. vii. 1.*

4. IN REGARD of the Condition of the new Covenant; wherein all Beginning, Growth, and Ending is from Grace, and Nothing but Grace.

5. BECAUSE old Grace, without a fresh Supply, will not hold against new Crosses and Temptations.

THEREFORE when *Christ* draws, let us run after Him; when He blows, let us open unto Him. It may be the last Blast that ever we shall have from Him. And let us set upon Duties with this Encouragement, that *Christ* will blow upon us; not only to prevent us, but also to maintain his own Graces in us. But Oh! where is this Stirring up of ourselves, and one another upon these Grounds?

2. WE are to observe, Why the Church is compared to a Garden. *Christ* uses all Manner of Terms to express Himself and the State of the Church, to shew us, that wheresoever we are, we may have Occasion of heavenly Thoughts. His Church is his Temple when we are in the Temple; it is a Field when we are there; but more particularly the Church is resembled to a Garden:

1. BECAUSE a Garden is taken out of the common waste Ground, to be appropriated to a more particular Use: So the Church of *Christ* is taken out of the Wilderness of this waste World, to a particular Use. It is in Respect of the Rest, as

Goshen to Egypt, wherein Light was, when all else was in Darknes. And indeed wherein doth the Church differ from other Grounds, but that *Christ* hath taken it in? It is the same Soil as other Grounds are, but He dresseth and fits it to bear Spices and Herbs.

2. IN a Garden nothing comes up naturally of itself, but as it is planted: So Nothing is good in the Heart, but as it is planted by the heavenly Husbandman. We need not sow the Wilderness, for Weeds prosper naturally. The Earth is a Mother to Weeds, but a Step-mother to Herbs. So evil Passions grow naturally, but Nothing grows in the Church, but as it is set by the Hand of *Christ*.

3. FURTHER, in a Garden there is Variety of Flowers and Spices; so in a Christian there is Something of every Grace. As some cannot hear of a curious Flower, but they will have it in their Garden; so a Christian cannot hear of any Grace, but he labours to obtain it; he labours for Graces for all Occasions. He hath for Prosperity, Temperance and Sobriety; for Adversity, Patience and Hope; for those that are above him, he hath Respect and Obedience; and for those under him, suitable Usage in all Conditions of Christianity: For the Spirit of GOD in him is a Seminary of all spiritual good Things.

4. AGAIN, of all other Places we most delight in our Gardens, and take Care thereof for Fencing, Weeding, Watering and Planting: So *Christ's* chief Care and Delight is for his Church. He walks in the Midst of the *seven golden Candlesticks*; and if He defend and protect States, it is that they may be a Harbour to his Church.

5. LASTLY,

5. LASTLY, A Garden stands always in need of Weeding and Dressing; continual Labour must be bestowed upon it; so in the Church and Hearts of Christians, *Christ* hath always Somewhat to do, we should else soon be over-grown and turn wild: In all which, and the like Respects, *Christ* calleth upon the Winds to blow upon his Garden.

Now to make Use of this: If the Church be a severed Portion, *We should walk, as Men of a severed Condition from the World*; not as Men of the World, but as Christians; to make good that we are so, by feeling the Graces of God's Spirit in some comfortable Measure, that so *Christ* may delight to dwell with us; and by being subject to his Pruning and Dressing. For, it is so far from being an ill Sign, that *Christ* is at Cost with us, in following us with Affliction, that it is rather a sure Sign of his Love. For the Care of this blessed Husbandman is to prune us so, as to make us fruitful.

LIKEWISE, let us learn hence, not to despise any Nation or Person; seeing GOD can take out of the waste Wilderness whom He will, and make the Desert an *Eden*.

AGAIN, let us bless GOD for ourselves, that our Lot hath fallen into such a pleasant Place, to be planted in the Church, the Place of GOD's Delight.

AND this also should move us to be fruitful; for tho' Men will endure a fruitless Tree in the Wilderness, yet who will endure it in their Garden? Dignity should mind us of Duty. It is strange to be fruitless and barren in this Place that we live in; being water'd with the Dew of Heaven, under the

the sweet Influence of the Means. How fearfully is this fruitless Estate threatened by the Holy Ghost? *Heb. vi. 8.* It is said to be near unto Curſing and Burning. And *John Baptist* declares, *Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire,* *Matt. iii. 10.*

LASTLY, in that the Church is called *Chriſt's* Garden, this may ſtrengthen our Faith in *GOD's* Care and Protection. The Church may ſeem to lie open to all Incurſions, but it hath an inviſible Hedge about it, a Wall without it, and a Well within it. *GOD* Himſelf is a Wall of Fire about it, and his Spirit a Well of Living Waters running through it, to reſreſh and comfort it. As it was ſaid of *Canaan*, ſo it may be ſaid of the Church, The Eye of the *LORD* is upon it all the Year long, and He waters it continually. From which eſpecial Care of *GOD* over it, this is a good Plea for us to *GOD*, I am Thine, ſave me; I am a Plant of thine own ſetting, nothing is in me, but what is thine, therefore cheriſh what is thine. So for the whole Church, the Plea is good; the Church is thine; fence it, water it, defend it, keep the wild Boar out of it. Therefore the Enemies thereof ſhall one Day know, what it is to make a Breach upon *GOD's* Vineyard. In the mean Time let us labour to keep our Hearts as a Garden, that nothing that defileth may enter.

LET us next conſider, the End of this Blowing upon the Garden; which is, you ſee, *That the Spices thereof may flow out.* Good Things lie dead and bound up in us, unleſs the Spirit let them out. We ebb and flow, open and ſhut, as the Spirit blows upon us. Without Blowing, no Flowing.

WE may observe from hence, That we need not only Grace to put Life into us at the first, but likewise Grace to quicken and draw forth that Grace that we have. This is the Difference betwixt Man's Blowing and the Spirit's: Man when he blows (if Grace be not there before) spends all his Labour upon a dead Coal, which he cannot make take Fire: But the Spirit first kindles a holy Fire, and then encreases the Flame. *Christ* had, in the Use of Means, wrought on the Church before, and now further promoteth his own Work. We must first take in, and then send out: First, be Cisterns to contain, and then, Conduits to convey. The Wind first blows, and then the Spices of the Church flow out. We are first sweet in ourselves, and then sweet to others.

WE see further from hence, That it is not enough to be good in ourselves, but our Goodness must flow out; that is, stream forth for the Good of others. We must labour to be (as was said of *John*) burning and shining Christians: For *Christ* is not like a Box of Ointment shut up; but like that Box of Ointment that *Mary* pour'd out, which perfumes the whole House. For the Spirit is herein like Wind, it carries the sweet Savour of Grace to others. A Christian, so soon as He finds any Rooting in GOD, is of a spreading Disposition, and makes the Place he lives in the better for him. The whole Body is better for every good Member; and, as we see in *Onesimus*, the meanest Persons, when they become to be good, are useful and profitable. Then we have what we have to purpose, when others have Occasion to bless GOD for us, for conveying Comfort to them by us. And for our Furtherance herein, the Winds are called upon to awake, and blow upon *Christ's* Garden, that the Spices thereof may flow out.

HENCE

HENCE we see also, That GOD delights to add Encouragement to Encouragement, to maintain new Setters out in Religion. He doth not only give them a Stock of Grace at the Beginning, but also helps them to Trade. He is not only *Alpha*, but *Omega* unto them; the Beginning and the Ending. He doth not only plant Graces, but also watereth and cherisheth them. Where the Spirit of *Christ* is, it is an encouraging Spirit: For it not only infuseth Grace, but also stirs it up, that we may be ready prepared for every good Work. The Spirit must bring all into Exercise, else Grace will lie asleep. We need a present Spirit to do every Good: Not only the Will, but the Deed is from the Spirit. This should excite us to go to *Christ*, that He may stir up his own Graces in us, that they may flow out.

LET us labour then in ourselves to be full of Goodness, that so we may be fitted to do Good to all. As GOD is good and does Good to all, so must we strive to be as like Him as may be. In which Case for others Sake, we must pray, that GOD would make the Winds to blow out fully upon us, that our Spices may flow out for their Good. Thus far of *Christ's* Command to the *North* and *South Wind* to awake and blow upon his Garden, that the Spices thereof may flow out.

IN the next Place we have, *Christ's* Invitation by the Church to come into his Garden; with the End thereof, to eat his pleasant Fruits. *Let my Beloved come into his Garden, and eat his pleasant Fruits.*

THESE Words shew, the Church's further Desire of *Christ's* Presence, to delight in the Graces of his own Spirit in her. She invites him to come
and

and take Delight in the Graces of his own Spirit. And she calls him *Beloved*, because all her Love is spent on *Christ*, who gave Himself to a cursed Death for her. Our Love should run no other Way, therefore the Church calls *Christ* her Beloved. *Christ* was there before, but she desires a further Presence of Him: Whence we may observe; that,

WHERESOEVER Grace is truly begun, there is still a further Desire of *Christ's* Presence, and Approaching daily more and more to the Soul. The Church never thinks *Christ* near enough, until she be in Heaven. The Bride always cryeth, *Come LORD Jesus, come quickly*. Now these Degrees of *Christ's* Approaches to the Soul until his second Coming, are, That He may manifest Himself more and more in defending, comforting, and enabling his Church with Grace: Every further Manifestation of his Presence, is a further Coming.

“BUT why is the Church thus earnest?” First, because Grace helps to see our Need of *Christ* and so helps us to prize Him the more; which high Esteem breeds an earnest Desire after Him, and a Desire of further Likeness to Him. And, Secondly, because the Church well knows, that when *Christ* comes to the Soul, He comes not alone, but with his Spirit; and his Spirit with Abundance of Peace and Comfort. This she knows, what Need she hath of his Presence, that without Him there is no comfortable Living: For wheresoever He is, He makes the Soul a Kind of Heaven, and all Conditions of Life comfortable.

HENCE we may see, that those that do not desire the Presence of *Christ* in his Ordinances, are (it is to be feared) such as the Wind of the Holy Ghost never

never blew upon. The Spirit in the Spouse is always saying to *Christ*, *Come*. It is from the Spirit, that we desire more of the Spirit; and from the Presence of *Christ*, that we desire a further Presence and Communion with Him.

Now let us consider the End and Reason why *Christ* is desired by the Church to come into his Garden, and that is, to eat his pleasant Fruits; or, in other Words, to give Him Contentment.

AND is it not fit that *Christ* should eat the Fruit of his own Vine, have Comfort of his own Garden, taste his own Fruits? The only Delight *Christ* hath in the World, is in his Garden: And that He might take the more Delight in it, He makes it fruitful; and those Fruits are precious Fruits, as growing from Plants set by his own Hand, relishing of his own Spirit, and so fitted for his Taste. Now the Church knowing the Fruits of Grace in her Heart, desireth that *Christ* would delight in his own Graces, and kindly accept of what she presented Him with.

WE see from hence, that a gracious Heart is privy to its own Grace and Sincerity; and so far as it is privy, is bold with *Christ* in a sweet and reverent Manner. So much Sincerity, so much Confidence. If our Heart condemn us not of Insincerity, we may in a reverent Manner speak boldly to *Christ*. It is not fit there should be Strangeness betwixt *Christ* and his Spouse; neither indeed will there be, when she is on the growing Hand.

BUT mark the Order: First, *Christ* blows, and then the Church says, *Come*. *Christ* begins in Love, then Love draws Love: *Christ* draws the Church,

Church, and she runs after Him. *The Fire of Love melts more than the Fire of Affliction.* Again, we may see here in the Church a Carefulness to please *Christ*. As it is the Duty, so it is the Disposition of the Church of *Christ* to please her Husband.

THUS far of the Church's Invitation of *Christ* into his Garden: Now follows his gracious Answer in the first Verse of this fifth Chapter: *I am come into my Garden, my Sister, my Spouse, I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice: I have eaten my Honey-Comb with my Honey: I have drunk my Wine with my Milk: Eat, O Friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O Beloved!*

THESE Words contain in them, an Answer to the Desire of the Church, in the latter Part of the Verse formerly handled: And then, *Ver. 2.* is set forth, the secure State of the Church at this Time; *I sleep, but my Heart waketh.* In setting down whereof, the Holy Ghost here by *Solomon* shews likewise, the loving Intercourse betwixt *Christ* and the Church. *Christ* upon the secure State of the Church desires her, *To open unto Him, Ver. 2.* Which Desire of *Christ* is put off with poor and slender Excuses, *Ver. 3.* *I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my Feet, how shall I defile them?* The Consequence of these Excuses is, that *Christ* goes away from the Church, *Ver. 6.* *I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone.* Whereupon she is restless, and enquires after *Christ* from the Watchmen, who misuse, wound her, and take away her Vail from her, *Ver. 7.*

HOWEVER the Church for all this gives not over searching after *Christ*, but asks the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, what was become of her *Beloved*,

Ver. 8. and withall in a few Words, but full of large Expression, she relates her Case unto them, that she was *sick of Love*; and so chargeth them to tell her Beloved, if they find Him. Whereupon a Question is moved by them, Ver. 9. *What is thy Beloved, more than another Beloved?* She takes Occasion hence (being full of Love, which is glad of all Occasions,) to speak of Him, to burst forth into his Praises, from Ver. 10, to the End of this Chapter.

THE Church here in her Encomiums of *Christ*, sets Him forth, 1. In general; beyond Comparison above all others, to be *the chiefest among ten Thousand*, Verse 10. And 2. In particular; describing Him, as lovely in every Part and Feature. The Issue whereof was, that the Daughters of *Jerusalem* became likewise enamour'd with Him, Chap. vi. 1. And thereupon also enquire after Him: *Whither is thy Beloved gone? Whither is thy Beloved turned aside? Tell us, that we may seek Him with thee.*

UPON this Demand the Church answers, *My Beloved is gone down into the Garden, to the Beds of Spices, to feed in the Gardens, and to gather Lillies.* Chap. vi. 2. And then makes a triumphant Close, Ver. 3. *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine: He feeds among the Lillies.* All which will better appear in the Particulars themselves.

THE first Thing then which offereth itself to our Consideration is, *Christ's* Answer to the Church's Invitation: *I am come into my Garden, my Sister, my Spouse, I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice; I have eaten my Honey-Comb with my Honey; I have drank my Wine with my Milk: Eat O Friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O Beloved!*

IN

IN this Verse we have, I. *Christ's Answer to the Church's Petition: I am come into my Garden.* II. A Description of the Church: *My Sister, my Spouse.* III. *Christ's* Acceptation of what He had gotten there; *I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice; I have eaten my Honey-Comb with my Honey.* IV. An Invitation of all *Christ's* Friends to an abundant Feast: *Eat O Friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O Beloved!*

I. IN that *Christ* makes such an Answer unto the Church's Invitation, *I am come into my Garden,* We see, that *Christ* comes into his Garden. 'Tis much that He that hath Heaven to delight in, will delight to dwell among the Sons of sinful Men; but this He doth for us, and so takes Notice of the Church's Petition, *Let my Beloved come into his Garden, and eat his pleasant Fruit:* The right Speech of the Church that gives all to *Christ*; who, when she hath made such a Petition, hears it.

GOD first of all makes his Church lovely, planteth good Things therein, and then stirs up in her good Desires; both Fitness to pray for an inward Disposition and holy Desires: After which, *Christ* hearing the Voice of his own Spirit in her, and regarding his own Preparations, answers them graciously. Whence we may observe, that, GOD stirs up holy Desires in us, and then answers the Desires of his holy Spirit in us.

LET this therefore be a singular Comfort to us, that as in all Wants, so in that of Friends, when we have none to go to, yet we have GOD, to whom we may freely pour out our Hearts; there being no Place in the World that can restrain us from his Presence, or his Spirit from us.

AGAIN; if GOD be thus ready to prepare our Hearts, and his Ear to hearken thereunto, let us stir up our Hearts to make Use of our Privileges. What a Prerogative is it for a Favourite to have the Ear of his Prince? Him we account happy. Surely he is much more happy that hath GOD's Ear; that hath GOD to be his Father in the Covenant of Grace; that hath Him reconciled, and can upon all Occasions pour out his Heart before Him, who is merciful and faithful, wise and most able to help us. Why are we discouraged therefore? and why are we cast down? when we have such a gracious GOD to go to in all our Extremities. He that can pray, can never be uncomfortable.

THIS should also stir us up to keep our Peace with GOD, that so we may always have Access unto Him, and Communion with Him. What a sad Case is it to lose other Comforts, and to be in such a State, that we cannot go to GOD with any Boldness? It is the greatest Loss of all, when we have lost the Spirit of Prayer. For if we lose other Things, we may recover them by Prayer: But when we have lost this Boldness to go to GOD, and are afraid to look Him in the Face, (as Malefactors the Judge) this is a woful State indeed.

Now there are divers Cases wherein the Soul is not in a State fit for Prayer. As that first, *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the LORD will not regard my Prayer.* If a Man purposeth to live in any Sin against GOD, He will not regard his Prayer. Therefore we must come with a resolute Purpose to break off all sinful Courses, and to give up ourselves to the Guidance of GOD's Spirit. And this will be a forcible Reason to move us thereunto, because so long as we live in any known Sin, GOD
neither

neither regards us nor our Prayers. *The very Sacrifice of the Wicked is abominable.*

ANOTHER Case is, when we will not forgive others. We know it is directly set down in the LORD'S Prayer, *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us*, Matt. vi. 12. and there is further added, ver. 15. *If you forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.* If our Hearts tell us, we have no Disposition to be at Peace and Agreement, then we do but take GOD'S Name in vain, when we ask Him to forgive our Sins. Shall I look for Mercy that have no merciful Heart myself? Can I hope to find that from GOD, that others cannot find from me? Neither is it sufficient to avoid Grudging and Malice against others; but we must look that they have not Cause to grudge against us. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there rememberst that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way; first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift*, Matt. v. 23. So that if we do not seek Reconciliation with Men, unto whom we have done Wrong, GOD will not be reconciled to us, nor accept any Service from us.

BUT here may be asked, "How shall I know whether GOD regards my Prayers or not?" 1. When He grants the Thing prayed for, or enlargeth our Hearts to pray still. It is a greater Gift than the Thing itself we beg, to have a Spirit of Prayer with a Heart enlarged: For as long as the Heart is enlarged to Prayer, it is a Sign that GOD hath a special Regard of us, and will grant our Petition in the best and fittest Time. 2. When He answers us in a better and higher Kind: As *Paul*, when he pray'd for the Taking away of the Thorns

of the Flesh, had Promises of sufficient Grace. And, 3. When He gives us inward Peace, though He give not the Thing we desired: So though He answers not our Prayers in particular; yet He vouchsafes inwards Peace unto us: *The Peace of GOD, which passeth all Understanding, guards our Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of GOD*, assuring us that it shall go well with us. And thus in not Hearing our Prayers, yet we have our Hearts Desire, when GOD's Will is made known. And is not this sufficient for a Christian, either to have the Thing, or to have inward Peace, with Assurance that it shall go better with him, than if he had it; with a Spirit enlarged to pray, 'till he have the Thing prayed for? For if any of these be given, GOD respects our Prayers.

AGAIN, in that *Christ* is thus ready to come unto his Garden upon the Church's Invitation; we may further observe, That *Christ* is ready to vouchsafe his gracious Presence to his Children, that call earnestly upon Him.

BUT some may say, "How shall we know that *Christ* is present in us?" We may know it in the Word and Sacraments, and in the Communion of Saints; for these are the Conveyances whereby He manifests Himself. As we need not take the Sun from Heaven, to know whether it be Day; which may be known by the Light, Heat, and Fruitfulness of the Creature: And as in the Spring, we need not look to the Heaven to see whether the Sun be come near us or not; for looking on the Earth, we may see all green, fresh, lively and vigorous: So it is with the Presence of *Christ*; we may know He is present, by that Light which is in the Soul: And there is together with Light, a Heat above Nature; the Affections are kindled to love the best Things,

Things, and to join in them: And together with Heat there is Strength and Vigour to carry us to spiritual Duties, framing us to a holy Communion with God, and one another: And there is every Way Cheerfulness and Enlargement of Spirit; as it is with the Creature when the Sun approacheth. For these Causes the Church desires *Christ*, that she may have more Light, Life, Heat, Vigour, Strength, and that she may be more cheerful and fruitful in Duties. The Soul, when it is once made spiritual, doth still desire a further and further Presence of *Christ*, to be made better and better.

WHAT a Comfort is this to Christians, that they have the Presence of *Christ* so far, as shall make them happy? Nothing but Heaven (or rather *Christ* in Heaven) itself, will content the Children of God. In the mean Time his Presence in the Congregation, makes their Souls, as it were, Heaven. If the King's Presence, who carries the Court with him, makes all Places where he is, a Court: So *Christ* carries a Kind of Heaven with Him, wheresoever He is: His Presence hath with it Life, Light, Comfort, Strength and all. For one Beam of his Countenance will scatter all the Clouds of Grief whatsoever. It is no Matter where we be, so *Christ* be with us. If we are with the three Children in a fiery Furnace, it is no Matter, if a Fourth be there also. If *Christ* be with us, Nothing shall hurt us. In a Dungeon, if *Christ's* Presence be there by his Spirit, all is comfortable: It changeth the Nature of all Things, sweetneth every Thing.

II. LET us next consider, the Description of the Church, *My Sister, my Spouse*. In these sweet Compellations, there is both Affinity and Consanguinity; 1. His Sister, by Blood; 2. His Spouse, by

by Marriage; all the Bonds that may tie us to *Christ*, and *Christ* to us.

I. WE may observe from hence, that *Christ* is our Brother, and the Church and every Member thereof is his Sister. *I go (saith Christ) to my Father, and to your Father, to my GOD and to your GOD. Go (saith He) and tell my Brethren.* This was after his Resurrection: His Advancement did not change his Disposition: Go, tell my Brethren that left me so unkindly; go tell *Peter* that was most unkind of all, and most cast down with the Sense of it. He became our Brother by Incarnation: For, all our Union is from the first Union of two Natures in one Person. *Christ* became *Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh*, to make us spiritually Bone of his Bone, and Flesh of his Flesh. Therefore, let us labour to be like to Him, who for that Purpose became like to us, *Immanuel*, GOD with us, that we might be like Him, and partake of the Divine Nature.

CHRIST was not ashamed to call us Brethren, nor abhorred the Virgin's Womb: He took our base Nature; and not only our Nature, but our Curse. He was not ashamed of us, and shall we be ashamed to own Him? Against this Cowardice, our Saviour pronounceth this Thunderbolt: *He that is ashamed of Me before Men, Him will I be ashamed of before my Father, and the holy Angels,* Mark viii. 38.

THIS should be a Motive to have good Christians in high Estimation, and to take Heed how we wrong them; for their Brother will take their Part. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?* saith the Head in Heaven, when his Members were trodden upon Earth. It is more to wrong a Christian,

stian, than the World imagines; for *Christ* takes it as done to Himself. *Absalom* was a Man wicked and unnatural, yet he could not endure the Wrong done to his Sister *Thamar*: And hath *Christ* no Affections, think you, now He is in Heaven, to her that is so near Him as the Church is? Howsoever He suffer Men to tyrannize over her for a-while, yet it will appear e'er long, that He will take the Church's Part, for He is our Brother.

THE Church is the Daughter of a King, begotten of GOD; the Sister and Spouse of a King, because she is the Sister and Spouse of *Christ*, and the Mother of all that are spiritual Kings. The Church of *Christ* is every Way royal. Therefore we are Kings, because we are Christians. Hence the Holy Ghost doth add here to Sister, Spouse: (Indeed, taking the Advantage of such Relations as are most comfortable to set out the excellent Relation that is between *Christ* and his Church.) Riches, Beauty, Marriage, Nobility, and the like, are scarce worthy of their Names; these are but empty Things, tho' our base Nature make great Matters of them; yet the Reality and Substance of all these are in heavenly Things. True Riches are the heavenly Graces; true Nobility is to be born of GOD, to be the Sister and Spouse of *Christ*. True Pleasures are those of the Spirit, which endure forever, and will stand when all outward Comforts vanish. That mystical Union is set down with such Variety of Expressions, to shew, that whatsoever is scattered in the Creature severally, is in Him entirely. He is both a Friend and a Brother, a Head and a Husband to us, therefore He takes the Names of all.

2. WE may observe further from hence, That the Church is the Spouse of *Christ*. It springs out of Him, as *Eve* out of *Adam*. The Spouse of *Christ*
was

was taken out of his Side, when it was pierced; the Church rose out of his Blood and Death; for He redeem'd it, by satisfying Divine Justice. We were in such a Condition, that *Christ* must redeem us, before He could wed us. First, He must be incarnate in our Nature, before He could be a fit Husband: And then, because we were in Bondage and Captivity, we must be redeem'd before He could marry us. *He purchased his Church with his own Blood.* *Ch* hath a Right to us, for He bought us dearly.

LET us then oft think of this Nearness between *Christ* and us, (if we have once given our Names to Him) and not be discouraged for any Sin or Unworthiness in us. Who sues a Woman for a Debt when she is married? Therefore answer all Accusations thus: Go to *Christ*; If you have any Thing to say to me, go to my Husband. What a Comfort is this to a distressed Conscience? If Sin cannot dismay us, which is the Cause of all Evil, what other Ill can dismay us? He that exhorts us to bear with the Infirmities one of another, will not He bear with his Church (performing the Duty of an Husband) in all her Infirmities? The Desire of *Christ* is to make her better, and not to cast her away for that which is amiss. And for outward Ills, they are but to refine and make us more conformable to *Christ* our Husband, to fit us for Heaven, the same Way that He went. *They have a Blessing in them all*, for He takes away all that is hurtful; He pities and keeps us as the Apple of his Eye. Therefore, let us often think of this, since He hath vouchsafed to take us so near to Himself.

AGAIN, if *Christ* be so near us, let us labour for chaste Affections; not cleaving to base Things. Our

Our Affections are never rightly bestowed, but when they are set upon *Christ*; and upon other Things as they stand with the Love of *Christ*. For the prime Love, when it is rightly bestowed, orders and regulates all other Loves whatsoever. No Man knows how to use earthly Things, but a Christian that hath first pitched his Love on *Christ*; and then seeing all Things in Him, and in all of them a Beam of that Love of his, intending Happiness to Him, he knows how to use every Thing in Order. Therefore let us keep our Communion with *Christ*, and esteem nothing more than his Love, because he esteems nothing more than ours.

III. THE next Branch is, *Christ's* Acceptation, *I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice: I have gathered my Honey-Comb with my Honey: I have drunk my Wine with my Milk.* So that together with *Christ's* Presence, here is a gracious Acceptation of the Provision of the Church, with a Delight in it, and withall a Bringing of more with him.

THE Church had a double Desire: 1. That *Christ* would come to accept of what she had for Him of his own Grace, which He had wrought in her Soul: And 2. She was also perswaded, that He would not come empty, and only to accept of what was there; but also would bring Abundance of Grace and Comfort with Him: Therefore she desires Acceptation and Increase: Both which Desires he answers. He comes to his Garden, shews his Acceptation, and withall He brings more. *I have gathered my Myrrh with my Spice: I have eaten my Honey-comb with my Honey: I have drunk my Wine with my Milk;* that is, I have taken Contentment in thy Graces. From whence we observe, that God accepts of the Graces of his Children, and delights in them.

BUT

BUT if so be, that GOD accepts the Performances and Graces, especially the Prayers, of his Children; let it be an Argument to encourage us, to be much in all holy Duties. It would deaden the Heart to perform Service where it would not be accepted. But when all that is good is accepted, and what is amiss is pardoned; when a broken Desire, a Cup of cold Water shall not be unrespected, nay, unrewarded, what can we desire more? It is Infidelity, which is dishonourable to GOD, and uncomfortable to ourselves, that makes us so barren and cold in Duties.

ONLY let our Care be to approve our Hearts unto *Christ*. When our Hearts are right, we cannot but think comfortably of *Christ*. Those that have offended some great Persons, are afraid when they hear from them, because they think they are displeasing to them: So a Soul that is under the Guilt of any Sin, is so far from thinking that GOD accepts of it, that it looks to hear nothing from Him, but some Message of Anger and Displeasure. But one that preserves Acquaintance, due Distance and Respect to a great Person, hears from him with Comfort: Before he breaks open a Letter, he supposes it comes from a Friend, one that loves him: So, as we would desire to hear nothing but good News from Heaven, and Acceptation of all that we do, let us be careful to preserve ourselves in a good State.

BUT this is not all: GOD not only accepts, and delights in the Graces of his Children; but *Christ* likewise comes with an Enlargement of what He finds. It is not only true of his last Coming to judge the Quick and the Dead, *I come, and my Reward is with me*; but also of his intermediate Comings. When He comes to the Soul, He comes not only

only to accept what is there, but still with his Reward with Him, to recompense all that is good with the Increase thereof.

LET us then be stirred up to have Communion with *Christ*, by this Motive, that thus we may have an Increase of Grace. Let us labour to be such as *Christ* may delight in; for our Graces are Honey and Spices to Him; and where He tastes Sweetness, He will bring more with Him. To him that overcometh, He promiseth the hidden Manna. They had Manna before; but He means, they shall have more abundant Communion with Himself, who is the hidden Manna. The Graces of the Spirit of *Christ* delight Him, as Honey and Wine do us; because in the Covenant of Grace He filleth us by the Spirit of Grace, to have Comfort in us, as we have in Him: For, except there be a mutual Joy in one another, there is not Communion. Therefore *Christ* furnisheth his Church with so much Grace, as is necessary for a State of Absence here, that may fit her for Communion with Him for ever in Heaven.

IV. WE come now to the Invitation of all *Christ's* Friends to partake of an abundant Feast. *Eat, O Friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O Beloved!* Wherein we find *Christ*, out of the Largeness of his Affections, multiplieth new Titles, Beloved and Friends.

FRIENDSHIP is the Sweetness, Intimateness, and Strength of Love. In our Friends our Love dwells and rests itself. Conjugal Friendship is the sweetest Friendship. All the Kinds and Degrees of Friendship meet in *Christ* toward his Spouse: It is the Friendship of a Husband, of a Brother, and if there be any Relation in the World, wherein

Friendship is, all is too little to express the Love of *Christ*. In Friendship, there is mutual Consent, an Union of Judgment and Affections; there is a mutual Sympathy in the Good and Ill one of another, as if there were one Soul in two Bodies. And there is likewise Liberty, which is the Life of Friendship. There is a free Intercourse between Friends, a free Opening of Secrets: So here *Christ* openeth his Secrets to us, and we to Him. We lay open all our Cares and Desires before Him; and *Christ's* Spirit reveals the Secrets of *Christ's* Heart to us concerning our Salvation. In Friendship also, there is Comfort one in another. "*Christ's* Delight was to be with the Sons of Men, and ours is to be with Him. And in Friendship there is a mutual Honour and Respect one of another. But here is some Difference in this Friendship; for though *Christ* calls us Friends, and therein in some Sort brings Himself down to us, yet we must remember, that this is a Friendship of Unequals: *Christ's* honouring of us is, his putting Honour upon us; our honouring Him, is the giving Him the Honour due to his Name. This Friendship must be maintain'd by due Respect on our Parts. As He is our Friend, so He is our King, and knows how to correct us if we forget our Distance. And as *Christ's* Friendship is sweet, so it is constant in all Conditions. If other Friends fail us, this Friend will never fail us. If we are not ashamed of Him, He will not be ashamed of us. How comfortable would our Life be, if we could draw out the Comfort this Title of Friend affordeth? It is a comfortable, a fruitful, and an eternal Friendship.

MARK now, how *Christ* draws his Friends on: *Eat, O Friends, drink, yea drink abundantly.* There is no Danger of taking too much. Where the Spring is infinite, we can never draw the Wells dry.

dry. We can never suck the Breasts of his Consolation too much; and the more strong and cheerful we are, the better Service we shall perform, and the more it will be accepted.

If any be hindred by Conceit of Unworthiness, if affected deeply with it, let them consider what Kind of Men were compelled to the Banquet; the Blind, the Lame. See a lively Picture of God's Mercy in the Example of the Prodigal; he fears sharp Chiding, and the Father provides a rich Banquet; he goeth to his Father, but the Father runs to meet him. Did *Christ* ever turn back any that came unto Him, if they came out of a true Sense of their Wants? Nay, but He saith, *Whosoever cometh to Me, I will by no Means cast him out.*

BUT let us enquire particularly, what it was that *Christ* took Delight in, and inviteth others to delight in. We find it was Myrrh and Spice, Honey and Honey-Comb, Wine and Milk: Which shew, 1. The Sweetness. 2. The Variety. 3. The Use of Grace and spiritual Comfort.

MYRRH and Spices, 1. Refresh the Spirits, and, 2. Preserve from Putrefaction, which are therefore used in Embalming. If the Soul be not embalm'd with Grace, it is a noisome carrion Soul; and as it is in itself, so whatsoever cometh from it is abominable. Again, Milk and Honey nourish and strengthen, and Wine encreaseth Spirits, and allayeth Sorrow and Cares. *Give Wine to him that is ready to die.* The Sense of the Love of *Christ* is sweeter than Wine, it banisheth Fears, and Sorrow and Care.

FROM this mutual Delight between *Christ* and his Spouse, we may observe next, That there is a

mutual Feasting betwixt *Christ* and his Church. The Church bringeth what she hath of his Spirit, and *Christ* comes with more Plenty. There is not the meanest Christian in whom there is not Something to welcome *Christ* withall; but *Christ* sends his Provision before, and comes (as we say) at his own Cost; He sends a Spirit of Faith, a Spirit of Love, a Spirit of Obedience.

SOME are content to invite others, but are loth to go to others; they would have wherewith to entertain *Christ*, but are unwilling to be beholding to *Christ*. And some are content to have Benefit by *Christ*, as his Righteousness to cover them, but they desire not Grace to entertain *Christ*. But a Heart truly gracious, desireth both to delight in *Christ*, and that *Christ* may delight in it: It desireth Grace together with Mercy, Holiness with Happiness. *Christ* could not delight in his Love to us, if we by his Grace had not a Love planted in our Hearts to Him. But to speak more largely of this Feast.

WE see it pleaseth *Christ* to vail heavenly Matters with Comparisons fetched from earthly Things, that so He may enter into our Souls the better by our Senses. So here *Christ* maketh us a Feast, a Marriage Feast with the King's Son, of all Feasts the most magnificent.

I. THIS is a Feast, first in Regard of the choice Rarities we have in *Christ*. The Comforts we have from *Christ*, are the best Comforts; the Peace, the best Peace; the Privileges, the highest Privileges. *His Flesh* crucified for us to satisfy Divine Justice, is *Meat indeed*; *his Blood* shed for us, is *Drink indeed*; these feed our Souls, and that to eternal Life. The Love of God the Father, in giving *Christ* to Death, and *Christ's* Love, in

giving Himself together with full Contentment to Divine Justice, is the Gift that the Soul especially feeds on: And this it daily feeds on, as daily Guilt riseth from the Breakings out of the Remainder of Corruption. If He giveth Himself, will He not give all Things with Himself.

2. As in a Feast there is Variety, so *Christ* maketh a Feast of Variety of choice Things for his Spouse. *Christ is made to us of GOD, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption*, that we should not be too much cast down with Thought of our own Folly, Guilt, Unholiness and Misery. There is that in *Christ* which answereth to all our Wants, and an All-sufficiency for all Degrees of Happiness. All the Graces and Comforts we have, and the Promises whereby they are made over unto us, are but *Christ* applied in several Manner, as the Need of every Christian shall require. *Christ* Himself is the Ocean, issuing into several Streams, to refresh the City of GOD. We can be in no Condition, but we have a Promise to feed on; and all Promises are *Yea and Amen*; made to us in *Christ*, and perform'd to us for *Christ*.

3. THEREFORE, as we have in *Christ* a Feast for Variety, so for Sufficiency of all Good. No Man goeth hungry from a Feast. In *Christ* there is not only Abundance, but Redundance; as in Clouds to drop down Showers; as in the Sun to send forth Beams. As *Christ* is full of Grace and Truth, so He fully dischargeth all his Offices. There is an Overflowing of all that is good for our Good. He that could multiply Bread for the Body, He can multiply Grace for our Soul. If He giveth Life, He giveth it in Abundance: If He giveth Water of Life, He giveth Rivers, not small Streams: If He giveth Peace and Joy, He giveth it in Abundance:

His Scope is to fill up our Joy to the Full. As He is able, so is *He willing, to do for us far more abundantly than we are able to think or speak.*

IN a Feast there is Variety of friendly Company; so here Friends are stirred up to refresh themselves with us. We have the blessed Trinity, the Angels and all our Fellow Members in *Christ* to come with us.

BUT here is the Mystery, the Founder and Master of the Feast is *Christ* Himself, and He is both Guest and Banquet and All. All Graces and Comforts are the Fruits of his Spirit, and He alone that infused the Soul, can satisfy the Soul. He that is above the Conscience, can only quiet the Conscience. He is that *Wisdom* that *sends forth Maidens*, *Prov. ix. 3.* his Ministers, to invite to his Feast. It is He that cheereth up his Guests, as here. Those that invited others, brought Ointment and poured it out upon them, to shew their Welcome, (as may appear by our Saviour's Speech to the *Pharisee* that invited him :) So we have from *Christ* both the Oil of Grace and Gladness. *He creates the Fruits of the Lips* to be *Peace*; speaking that Peace and Joy to the Heart that others do to the Ear.

THE Vessels wherein *Christ* conveyeth his Dainties, are, the Ministry of the *Word* and *Sacraments*. By these we come to enjoy *Christ*, his Comforts and Graces; and by this Feast of Grace we come at length to the Feast of Glory; where we shall be satisfied with the Image of GOD, and enjoy Fulness of Pleasures for evermore.

UPON the Whole, we cannot please *Christ* better than by a cheerful taking Part of his rich Provision: And a Christian aims to *rejoice always in the*

the LORD, and that from enjoying our Privileges in Him. We are not bidden to mourn always, but to *rejoice always*. Indeed we have Causes of Mourning, but it is that the Seed of Joy should be sown in Mourning; and we can never be in so forlorn a Condition, wherein, if we understand *Christ* and ourselves, we have not Cause of Joy. We should labour then to bring with us a Taste for these Dainties, and an Appetite to them. The Soul hath a Taste of its own; and as all Creatures that have Life, have a Taste to relish and distinguish that which is good for them, from that which is offensive; so wheresoever spiritual Life is, there is likewise a Taste suitable to spiritual Things. And if there were not a Taste in the Soul, we could never delight in GOD, and his rich Goodness in *Christ*.

A FURTHER Observation we shall make upon this gracious Invitation of *Christ* to his Friends to Partake of his Graces and Dainties, is, That as He therein comes stored with further Grace and Comfort for his People, and stirs up both the Church, and all that bear Good-will to it, to delight in the Graces and Comforts of his Church; so we ought to rejoice in the Comforts and Graces of others, and of ourselves.

A CHRISTIAN should not only examine his Heart for the Evil that is in him, to be humbled; but what Good there is, that he may be thankful. And since *Christ* accepts the very First-Fruits, and delights in them, we should know what He delights in, that we may go boldly to Him, considering, that it is not of ourselves, but of *Christ*, whatsoever is Good: Therefore we ought to know our own Graces. And here we have Need to have *Christ's* Spirit to help us to know what Good is in us.

us. And *Christ*, when He will have us comfortable indeed, will discover to us what Cause we have to rejoice, and shew us what is the Work of his own Spirit.

AND we should not only rejoice on our own Accounts, that we have found Favour in the Sight of God, and are made Partakers of his Grace, but also in the happy Condition of every good Christian. There is Joy in Heaven at the Conversion of one Sinner: Even so all true-hearted Christians should joy in the Graces one of another. Want of Joy, shews Want of Grace. There is not a surer Character of a Satanical Disposition, than to look on the Graces of God's Children with a malignant Eye. All that have Grace in them, are of *Christ's* and of the Angels Disposition: They joy at the Conversion and Growth of any Christians. Such are stiled here, *Friends and Beloved*; and indeed none but Friends and Beloved can love as *Christ* loves, and delight as *Christ* delights.

FROM discoursing on this loving Intercourse between *Christ* and his Church, we shall proceed to consider the Church in a different Situation; which she expresses thus, Ver. 2. *I sleep, but my Heart waketh.*

WE find here a great Change in the spiritual Condition of the Church. After she had recovered herself out of a former Desertion, expressed in the Beginning of the third Chapter, she now falleth into a deeper Desertion, from the Remainder of Corruption getting Strength. She now falleth asleep; then she was awake in the Night, and sought her Beloved: Here is no present Awaking, no Seeking; there no Misusage by the Watchmen, as here: There

There she findeth Him more speedily; here she falls sick with Love before *Christ* discovereth Himself.

BEFORE we come to the Words, observe in general, That the State of the Church, and every Christian is subject to many spiritual Alterations. Like as we see in *Abraham*, sometimes strong in Faith, sometimes fearful: In *David*, sometimes standing, sometimes falling, sometimes recovering himself, and standing faster; sometimes triumphing, *The LORD is the Light of my Countenance, whom shall I fear?* Sometimes again crying out, *I shall one Day fall by the Hands of Saul.* There is no Creature subject to so many Changes as Man: From a State of Innocency he fell into a State of Corruption; from that he by Grace is restored to a State of Grace; and from Grace to Glory: But it should be our Care to watch, lest Corruption gather Head, and ill Humours break out, and to strive for an even Frame of Soul here, 'till we come thither, where our Condition shall be as now *Christ's* is, and as Heaven is, altogether unchangeable.

To come to the Words: They contain, 1. a Confession, *I sleep*; and, 2. a Correction, *but my Heart waketh.* The Church hath a double Aspect; one to the Ill, her Sleeping; the other to her Good, her Heart, in some Degree, awaked.

WE see here, That after a Feast the Church falleth asleep: But we must not here conceive this Sleep to be that dead Sleep that all Men are in by Nature; nor to be that judicial Sleep, that Spirit of Slumber, which is a further Degree of that natural Sleep, to which God giveth up some as a Seal of their desperate Condition; but here is meant that Sleep that ariseth out of the Remainder of Corruption unsubdued, and prevailing over the better Part.

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By comparing the State of the Church here, with the State of it in the third Chapter, we find that where a careful Watch is not kept over the Soul, there, after a Recovery, will follow a more dangerous Distemper. It is best therefore to deal thoroughly with our Hearts, else we shall dishonour our own Beginnings. Unless we stand upon our Guard, the Flesh will get the upper Hand. The best are no farther safe, than they are watchful.

What great Need have we then to shun this sleepy Temper, which for the present so locks up *the everlasting Gates* of our Soul, *that the King of Glory cannot enter in*; and to strive for this blessed Heart-waking Disposition, which may help us at all Times to see our Dangers, and by God's Blessing recover us out of them; as here the Church doth at length, tho' first beaten by the *Watchmen*, and in a World of Perplexities, e're she can recover her former Communion with *Christ*. We find by Experience, what a woful Thing it is for the Soul, which hath once tasted how gracious the LORD is, to be without a Sense of God's Love. When it looks upon Sin, as the Cause of this Separation; this is as Death unto it. Therefore the Church's Experience must be our Warning, how we grieve the Spirit, and so fall into this spiritual Sleep.

We may observe farther in these Words, the Ingenuity of the Church in laying open her own State. And it is the Disposition of God's People to be ingenuous in this Respect. And there is good Reason: For this ingenuous Dealing (besides that it is giving Glory to God) easeth the Soul. Whilst the Arrow's Head sticks in the Wound it will not heal. Sin unconfessed is like a broken Piece of Iron in the Body; it must be gotten out, else it will by Festring cause more Danger. It is like
Poison

Poison in the Stomach, if it be not presently cast up it will infect the whole Body. Is it not better then to take Shame to ourselves now, than to be ashamed hereafter before Angels, Devils and Men? The Cause of God's severe Dealing with us, is, that we should deal severely with ourselves. The best Trial of Religion in us, is, by those Actions whereby we reflect on ourselves, by judging and condemning of ourselves; for this argueth a Spirit without Guile. Sin and Shifting came into the World together.

MARK further another Sign of a gracious Soul, To be abased for lesser Defects, Sleepiness and Indisposition to Good. One would think Drowsiness were no such great Matter: O! but the Church had such sweet Acquaintance with *Christ*, that every little Indisposition that hindred any Degree of Communion was grievous to her. Many confess great Falls, but how few are humbled for Dullness of Spirit, Want of Love, of Zeal, and Cheerfulness in Duty? This accompanied with Strife against it, argues a good Spirit. A carnal Man is not more humbled for gross Sin, than a Christian for Wants in good Actions, when it is not with him as it hath been, and as he would. The Reason is, where there is a clear Light, there Motes are discernible: and spiritual Life is sensible of any Obstruction. This goeth in the World for unnecessary Nicety: The World straineth not at those Gnats: But those upon whose Hearts the Sun of Righteousness hath shined, have both a clear Sight and a tender Heart.

You see here, that a Christian hath two Principles in him, that which is Good, and that which is Evil, whence issueth the Weakness of his Actions and Affections: They are all mixed, as are
the

the Principles from which they come forth. We may observe further, that a Christian Man may know how it is with himself, though he be mixed of Flesh and Spirit; he hath a distinguishing Knowledge and Judgment whereby he knows both the Good and Evil in himself. In a Dungeon where there is nothing but Darkness, both on the Eye that should see, and on that which should be seen, he can see nothing; but where there is a supernatural Principle, there the Light of the Spirit searcheth the dark Corners of the Heart. A Man that hath the Spirit knoweth both; he knoweth himself and his own Heart. The Spirit hath a Light of its own, even as Reason hath. Shall a Man that is natural reflect upon his State, and know what he knows, what he thinks, what he doth? And may not the Soul that is raised to an higher State know as much? Undoubtedly it may. Besides, we have the Spirit of GOD, which is Light, and Self-evidencing: It shews unto us, where it is, and what it is. The Spirit of GOD is a discerning Spirit, it discovereth what is Flesh and what is Spirit.

I SLEEP. It is one Use of our Body to help us in spiritual Expressions: So here the Church fetcheth a Comparison from the Body to express the State of the Soul. *I sleep.* And indeed bodily and spiritual Sleep resemble each other, in the Causes, in the Effects, and in the dangerous Issue.

WITH regard to their Causes: As natural Sleep ariseth oft from Weariness, and Want of Spirits: So there is a spiritual Sleep arising from Discouragements, and too much Expence of the Strength of the Soul upon other Matters, upon Impertinencies that concern it not. Again, as some are brought to sleep by Musick: So many by flattering Enticements

ments and Insinuations of others are cast into a spiritual Sleep. Again, Sleep often ariseth from Want of Exercise: So when there is a Cessation from spiritual Exercise, there followeth a spiritual Sleep. Exercise keeps Waking. Again, sometimes Sleep is caused by some Kind of Poison, especially the Poison of Asps, which kills in sleeping: And do not sinful Delights do the like to the Soul? Insensible Evils are the most dangerous.

WITH Regard to their Effects, the bodily and spiritual Sleep are also alike. Men will draw the Curtains and shut out Light, when they mean to compose themselves to Rest: So when Men favour themselves in some Ways not allowable, they are afraid to be disquieted by the Light. Light discovereth, awaketh and stirs up to Working: And Men, when they are loth to do what they know, are loth to know what they should do. *They that sleep, sleep in the Night.* Much of the Anger that Men bear against the Word laid open to them, is because it will not suffer them to sleep quietly in their Sins. There cannot be a worse Sign than when Men will not endure wholesome Words. In Sleep, Men dream of false Good, and forget true Danger. Many dream of Meat, and when they awake, their Soul is empty. Vain Hopes are the Dreams of waking Men, as vain Dreams are of sleeping and carnal Men, whose Life is but a Dream. In Sleep there is no Exercise of Senses or Motion; as then Men are not sensible of Good or Ill. Motion followeth Sensibleness. What Good we are not sensible of, we move not unto. Hence Sleep is of Kin to Death, for the Time depriving us of the Use of all Senses. It is all one to have no Senses, and not to use them. We may say of Men in this sleepy Temper, as the Scripture speaks of Idols, *They have Mouths, but they speak*

not; they have Eyes and see not; Ears and hear not; Noses have they, but they smell not; they have Hands, but they handle not; Feet have they, but they walk not, Psal. cxv. 5, 6, 7.

THEY are likewise alike in Danger: In Sleep the most precious Thing Men carry about them, is taken away without Relistance; and they are ready to let loose what they held fast before, were it never so rich a Jewel: And it is so in spiritual Sleepiness: Men suffer the Profession of the Truth to be wrung from them without much Withstanding; and with letting fall their Watch, let fall likewise their Grace, and are in Danger to be robbed of all. There is no Danger but a Man in Sleep is fair for, and exposed unto. *Sifera* was slain asleep, and *Ishbosheth* at Noon-day. There is no Temptation, no Sin, no Judgment, but a secure, drowsy Soul, is open for. And therefore Watchfulness is so often enforced by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures.

HAVING thus treated of the Confession of the Church, I proceed now to say something of the Correction, expressed in these Words, *But my Heart waketh.*

THE Word Heart you know includes the whole Soul: For the Heart is put for the Understanding; as we say, an understanding Heart. To lay Things up in our Hearts; there it is Memory: And to cleave in Heart is to cleave in Will. To rejoice in Heart, means, in the Affection: So that all the Powers of the Soul, the whole inward Man, (as *Paul* calleth it) is understood by the Heart.

BUT what is that Good the Church confesseth, when she saith, *My Heart waketh*? First, tho' she be in a sleepy State, yet she hath her Judgment sound

found. And again, tho' she be asleep she hath a Working in the Will choosing the better Part which she will cleave to. The Child of GOD, though asleep hath a general Purpose to please GOD in all Things, and no settled Purpose to sleep thus: Answerable to his Judgment therefore he chooseth the better Part and Side; he owns GOD, and his Cause, even in evil Times, cleaving in Resolution of Heart to the best Ways, though with Weakness. Her Conscience likewise is awake in some Degree. So the Conscience of GOD's Children is never so sleepy, but it awaketh in some Measure; There is so much Life in it, as upon Speech or Conference, there will be an Opening of it, and a Yielding at length to the Strength of spiritual Reason. And answerable to these inward Powers is the outward Obedience of GOD's Children, in their sleepy Estate: They go on in a Course of Obedience, tho' coldly, and not so as to give others a good Example, or yield themselves Comfort.

BUT how shall we keep our Souls awake? Think that ere long we shall be drawn to an exact Account, before a strict Judge: And shall our Eyes then be sleeping and careless? These and such like Considerations we should propound to ourselves, that so we might have waking Souls.

MOREOVER it conduceth much to the Awakening of the Soul to keep Faith awake. It's not the Greatness alone, but the Presence of great Things that stirs us: Now it is the Nature of Faith to present Things powerfully to the Soul; for it sets Things before us in the Word of JEHOVAH, that made all Things of nothing, and is LORD of his Word, to give a Being to whatsoever He hath spoken. Faith is an awakening Grace, keep that awake, and it will keep all other Graces awake.

WHEN a Man believes, that all these Things shall be on Fire ere long; that Heaven and Earth shall fall in Pieces; that we shall be shortly called to give an Account of the Things done in the Body; when Faith apprehends, and sets this to the Eye of the Soul, it affects the same marvellously: Therefore let Faith set before the Soul some present Thoughts according to its Temper; sometimes terrible Things to awaken it out of its Dullness; sometimes glorious Things, Promises and Mercies, to awaken it out of its Sadness; when we are in a prosperous Estate, let Faith make present all the Sins and Temptations that usually accompany such an Estate; if in Adversity, think of what Sins may beset us there; this will awaken such Graces in us, as are suitable to such an Estate, for the preventing of such Sins and Temptations, and so keep our Hearts in Exercise to Godliness.

WITHALL, labour for Abundance of the Spirit of GOD: For what makes Men sleepy and drousy? The Want of Spirits, whereby the Strength sinks and falls. Christians should know, that there is a Necessity, if they will keep themselves waking, to keep themselves spiritual. Pray for the Spirit above all Things; it is the Life of our Life, the Soul of our Soul. What is the Body without the Soul, or the Soul without the Spirit of GOD? Even a dead Lump. And let us keep ourselves in such good Ways, that we may expect the Presence of the Spirit to be about us, which will keep us awake.

AGAIN, we must keep ourselves in as much Light as may be; for all Sleepiness comes with Darkness. Let us keep our Souls in a perpetual Light. When any Doubt or dark Thought ariseth, upon yielding thereunto there comes a sleepy Temper. Sleepiness in the Affections ariseth from Dark-

Darkness of Judgment. The more we labour to encrease our Knowledge, and the more the spiritual Beams of it shine in at our Windows, the more shall we be able to keep awake.

ANOTHER Means to keep the Soul awake is to labour to preserve it in the Fear of God. Fear is a waking Affection, yea one of the wakefullest: For, naturally, we are more moved with Dangers, than stirred with Hopes; therefore that Affection that is most conversant about Danger, is the most rousing and waking Affection. It is one Character of a Christian, who, when he hath lost almost all Grace (to his Feeling) yet the Fear of God is always left with him. God makes that Aw the Bond of the New Covenant: *I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall never depart from me.* One Christian is better than another, by how much he fears more than another. Of all Christians, mark, those are most gracious, spiritual, and heavenly, that are the most awful, and careful of their Speeches, Courtes, and Demeanours; tender, even of offending God in little Things. Always as a Man grows in Grace, he grows in Awfulness, and in Jealousy of his own Corruptions. Therefore let us preserve by all Means this awful Affection, the Fear of God. Let us examine the State of our own Souls, which will preserve us in a waking State. It is a notable Means to keep us awake when we keep our Hearts in Fear of such Sins, as either by Calling, Custom, Company or the Time we live in, or by our own Disposition, we are most prone to.

IN the last Place, it is a Thing of no small Consequence, that we keep Company with waking and faithful Christians, such as neither sleep themselves, nor willingly suffer any to sleep that are near them. It is a Report and a true one of the

Sweating-Sickness, that they that were kept awake, by those that were with them, escaped; but the Sickness was deadly if they were suffered to sleep. It is one of the best Fruits of our spiritual good Acquaintance to keep one another awake. It is an unpleasing Work on both Sides: But we shall one Day cry out against all them, that have pleased themselves and us, in rocking us asleep, and thank those that have pulled us with Fear out of the Fire, tho' against our Wills.

THE Church having so freely and ingenuously confessed what she could against herself, proceeds yet further to acquaint us with the Particulars of her Disposition: Ver. 2. *It is the Voice of my Beloved that knocketh*: Wherein we find (which is a good Sign) that she was not in a dead Sleep, but that she heard and discerned the Voice of her Beloved; and more than that, that she remembered all his sweet Words and Allurements, whereby He pressed her to open unto Him, saying, *Open to me, my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my Undeiled*; which is set out, with a further moving Argument of those Inconveniences which *Christ* had suffered in his waiting for Entertainment in her Heart: *For my Head is filled with the Dew, and my Locks with the Drops of the Night*. All which aggravates her Offence, and his Patience towards miserable Sinners; that He should wait so long for Admission into our wretched Souls, that He may govern them by his Spirit.

FROM the Church's hearing and discerning the Voice of her Beloved, we may observe that a Christian Soul doth know the Voice of *Christ*, even in a sleepy State: But much more when in a lively Frame.

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GOD'S Believers are *Christ's* Sheep: Now my Sheep (saith *Christ*) bear my Voice. It is the Ear-Mark (as it were) of a Christian, one of the Characters of the New Man, to taste Words by the Ear (as *Jab* saith;) He hath a spiritual Taste, a discerning Relish in his Ear; for he hath the Spirit of God, and therefore relisheth what is suitable to the Spirit. Now the Voice of *Christ* without in the Ministry, and the Spirit of *Christ* within in the Heart, are suitable each to other.

ANOTHER Point we may gather from hence, is That, take a Christian at the lowest, his Heart yearns after *Christ*; acknowledging Him to be his Beloved. There is a conjugal Chastity in the Soul of a true Christian, holding firm to the Covenant and Marriage between *Christ* and it; he keeps that unviolable. Though he may be drowsy, yet there remains a conjugal, Spouse-like Affection.

WE come now to make some Observations on *Christ's* Carriage towards the Church in Order to gain Admittance. And 1. He knocketh; 2. He bespeaks her with sweet and friendly Compellations; and 3. He lays before her his great Patience and the Inconveniency He suffered in waiting long for Admittance. From whence we may observe in general, That *Christ* still desires further and further Communion with his Church.

EVEN as the true Soul, that is touched with the Spirit, desires nearer and nearer Communion with *Christ*: So He seeks nearer and nearer Communion with his Spouse by all sanctified Means. *Christ* hath never enough of the Soul.

AGAIN, we may see from hence, that *Christ* takes not the Advantage of the Sins of his Church, to leave

leave her altogether. Tho' the Church be sleepy, *Christ* continues knocking. The Church of *Laodicea* was a lukewarm, proud, hypocritical Church; yet, *behold* (saith *Christ*) *I stand at the Door and knock*. And here He doth not stand knocking, but He withall suffereth Indignities, the Dew to fall upon Him. *Christ* therefore refuseth not weak Sinners: He that commands, *that we should receive him that is weak in the Faith*, will He reject him that is weak and sleepy? No. What Father will neglect his Child for some Failings, and Weaknesses? Nature will move him to respect him as a Child.

How merciful is *Christ* both by his Office, and by his Nature? He took our Nature upon Him, that He might be a merciful Redeemer. And then as God also He is Love. Whatsoever God shews Himself to his Church, He doth it in Love: If He be angry in correcting, it is out of Love: If merciful, it is out of Love: If He be powerful in defending his Church, and revengeing Himself on our Enemies, all is Love. God is Love (saith *John*) that is, He shews Himself only in Expressions of Love to his Church. So *Christ*, as God, is all Love to the Church. Likewise *Christ* as Man, was Man for this End, to be all Love and Mercy. Take Him in his Office, as *Jesus* to be a Saviour, He carrieth Salvation in his Wings.

Let us more particularly consider the Means that *Christ* useth in Order to gain Admittance. And here how excellently is the Expression of *Christ's* Mercy, Love and Patience set out in the first Thing? *He knocketh*. The Expression is taken from the Fashion of Men, in this Kind; God condescending to speak to us in our own Way. He knocks that we should open and let Him come into our Hearts, into our more intimate Affections.

BUT

BUT how doth He knock? Every Kind of Way. Sometimes there is a Calling for Entrance by Voice; and when a Voice may serve, there needs no further Knocking. Sometimes both by Voice and Knocking. If the Voice will not serve, Knocking comes after. So it is here, *Christ* doth knock, and speak; useth a Voice of his Word, and knocks by his Works; and both together sometimes: But whether by Works of Mercy or of Judgment, he labours to raise the sleepy Soul.

CHRIST usually begins to call with Mercy. All the Creatures and Blessings of GOD carry in them (as it were) a Voice of GOD to the Soul, that it would entertain his Love. There goes a Voice of Love with every Blessing. And the Love, the Mercy and Goodness of GOD in the Creature, is better than the Creature itself. As we say of Gifts, The Love of the Giver is better than the Gift itself: So the Love of GOD, in all his Benefits, is better than the Thing itself. Every Creature and Benefit speaks as it were thus to us; We serve thee, that thou mayst serve Him, that made thee and us. There is a Speech (as it were) in every Favour. If Favours cannot prevail, then come Corrections, which are the Voice of GOD also: *Hear the Rod and him that smiteth.* "But hath the Rod a Voice?" Yes; for what do Corrections speak, but Amendment of the Fault we are corrected for? So we must hear the Rod, all Corrections; they are as Knockings, that we should open to GOD and *Christ*. And because Corrections of themselves will not amend us, GOD, to this Kind of Knocking, adds a Voice; He teacheth and corrects together. *Happy is that Man that Thou correctest, and teachest out of thy Law,* saith the Psalmist. Correction without Teaching is to little Purpose; therefore GOD adds Instruction to Correction. He opens the Conscience

ence so, that it tells us, it is for this that we are corrected. Both Blessings and Corrections are from GOD, *they will not away*, (especially Corrections) 'till they have an Answer; for they are sent of GOD, who will be sure to have an Answer, either in our Conversion, or Confusion, when He begins once.

MANY other Ways GOD useth to knock at our Hearts. The Examples of those that are good call upon us. The Examples of GOD's Justice upon others, are Speeches to us. He knocks at our Door then. He intends our Correction, when He visits another; so that if we amend by that, He needs not take us in Hand.

BUT besides all this, there is a more near Knocking that *Christ* useth to the Church; his Ministerial Knocking. In the Days of his Flesh He was a Preacher and Prophet Himself, and now He is ascended into Heaven, He hath given Gifts to Men, and Men to the Church, whom he speaks by to the End of the World; they are *Christ's* Mouth. As we said of the Penmen of Holy Scripture, they were but the Hand to write, *Christ* was the Head to indite: So in preaching and unfolding the Word, they are but *Christ's* Mouth and his Voice, as it is said of *John*; and as it is said of *Noah's* Time, *The Spirit of Christ preached in the Days of Noah to the Souls in Prison*. And now He is in Heaven, He speaks by them: And *Christ* is either received or rejected in his Ministers: *He that beareth you, beareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me*.

CHRIST speaks by his Ministers, and they use all Kind of Means that *Christ* may be entertained. They move all Stones, as it were, sometimes Threatnings, sometimes Intreaties; sometimes they

come

come as Sons of Thunder, sometimes with the still Voice of Promises: And because one Man is not so fit as another for all Varieties of Conditions and Spirits; therefore God gives Variety of Gifts to his Ministers, that they may knock at the Heart of every Man by their several Gifts. *John Baptist*, by a more thundering Way of Preaching, to make Way for *Christ* to come, threateneth Judgment: But *Christ* comes with, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit; Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for Righteousness.* All Kind of Means have been used in the Ministry from the Beginning of the World. And as the Church heard and knew the Voice of her Beloved; so every Christian takes Notice of the Means that God useth for his Salvation. A Christian is sensible of all the blessed Helps thereto. To a dead Heart, indeed, it is all one, whether they have Means or no Means; but a Christian Soul takes Notice of all the Means; says of all, *It is the Voice of my Beloved!* It hears *Christ*, sees *Christ* in all.

BUT because of itself this Ministry is a dead Letter, therefore he joins that, which knocks at the Heart together with the Word; Even the Spirit, which is the Life and Soul of the Word; and when the inward Word or Voice of the Spirit, and the outward Word or Ministry go together, then *Christ* doth effectually knock, and stir up the Heart. Now this Spirit with sweet Inspirations moves the Heart, lightens the Understanding, quickens the dull Affections, and stirs them up to Duty; as it is, *Isa. xxx. 21. And thine Ears shall hear a Voice behind thee, saying, This is the Way, walk in it.* The Spirit moves us sweetly agreeable to our own Nature; it offers not Violence to us: But so as in *Hosea xi. 4. I drew them by the Cords of a Man;* that is, by Reasons and Motives besitting the Nature of a Man.

AND

AND besides his Spirit, GOD hath planted in us a Conscience to call upon us, to be his Vicar, a little GOD in us to do his Office, to call upon us, to direct us, check, and condemn us. And whilst *Christ* thus knocketh, all the three Persons may be said to do it: For there is the Father and the Spirit with *Christ*, who doth all by his Spirit, and from whom He hath Commission. Therefore GOD the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost knock at the Heart. *Open to Me my Love, my Dove, my Undeiled; But Christ* especially by his Spirit, because it is his Office.

THEREFORE let us take Notice of this Voice of *Christ* in the Word, and not think as *Samuel* thought, that *Eli* spake when GOD spake; let us think that GOD speaks to us in the Ministry, that *Christ* comes to wo us, and win us thereby. And we Ministers are the Friends of the Bridegroom, who are to hear what *Christ* saith to the Church; and we must pray to Him, that He would teach us what to teach others. We are to procure the Contract, and to perfect it 'till the Nuptials are in Heaven; that is our Work. And you that are Hearers, if you do not regard *Christ's* Voice in the Ministry; know there is a Voice you cannot shake off, that peremptory Voice at the Day of Judgment, *Go, ye cursed into Hell-fire.*

BUT our Adversaries say, "How shall we know that the Word is the Word of GOD? For this Heretick saith thus, and this interprets it thus." This is the common Objection of the great Rabbies amongst them. We answer, GOD's *Sheep hear his Voice*; when his Word is unfolded, his Spirit goes together with it, breeding a Relish of the Word in the Hearts of the People, whereby they are able to taste and relish it; and that hath a supernatural Power

Power and Majesty in it, which carries its own Evidence. How shall we know Light to be Light? It carries Evidence in itself that it is Light. How know we that the Fire is hot? Because it carries Evidence in itself that it is so. So if you ask, How we know the Word of GOD to be the Word of GOD? I say, it carries in itself inbred Arguments and Characters, so that the Soul can say, This Word can be none other but the Word of GOD; it hath such a Majesty and Power to cast down, and raise up, and to comfort, and to direct, that it carries with it its own Evidence. Thus we answer them; which they can answer no Way, but by Cavils. *GOD's Sheep hear the Voice of Christ.* He speaks, and the Church understands Him, *and a Stranger's Voice they will not hear,* John x. 5. And indeed, this is the only sure Way of Understanding the Word to be of GOD, from an inbred Principle of the Majesty in the Word, and a powerful Work thereof on the Soul itself; and an Assent so grounded, is that which makes a sound Christian.

To make some Use of this Consideration of *Christ's* various and frequent Knocking at our Hearts: First, think well of *Christ*. Time will come, that the Devil will set upon us with sharp Temptations, fiery Darts, Temptations to despair, and present *Christ* amiss, as if He were not willing to receive us: But seeing He knocks at our Hearts, useth Mercies and Judgments, the Ministry of his Spirit, and Conscience, and all; will He not entertain us, when we come to Him, that seeks this Entertainment at our Hands? Certainly He will. And we need not wonder at this his Willingness to receive us, when we first know that GOD became Man, and *Life itself came to die, and to be a Curse for us.* He hath done the greater, and will He do not the less? Such Considerations as these

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being mixed with the Spirit, are effectual for the Conversion of poor Souls. Is there such Love in God to become Man, and to be a Suitor to woo me for my Love? Surely thinks the Soul then, He Desires my Salvation and Conversion. And to what Kind of Persons doth He come? None can object Unworthiness: I am poor; *He comes to the Poor*: I am laden and wretched; He says, *Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and laden*. I have nothing; He says, *Come and buy Honey, Milk and Wine, tho' you have Nothing*. You can object Nothing, but it is taken away by the Holy Ghost, wisely preventing all the Objections of a sinful Soul. This is the Beginning of Conversion; and when we are converted, these Thoughts with Admiration of *Christ's* Condescending, are effectual to give *Christ* further Entrance into the Soul.

OH! but take Heed that these make not any secure: For if we give not Entrance to *Christ*, all this will be a further Aggravation of our Damnation. How will this justify the Sentence upon those hereafter, that now bid *Christ* depart from them? What do prophane Persons in the Church, but bid *Christ* depart from them? Especially in the Motions of his Spirit? They entertain *Christ* in the outward Room, they know a little of Him in the Brain; but in the Heart, the secret Room, He must not come. Is it not equal, that He should say to such, *Depart ye Cursed, I know you not?* You would not give Entrance to me, I will not now entertain you. Where God magnifies his Mercy in this Kind, inviting by Judgments, Mercies, Ministry, and Spirit, if they be despised, He will magnify his Judgment hereafter. Let us then consider, The greater Means, the greater Judgments, if we be not won by them. Therefore let us labour to hold *Christ*. Let Him have the best Room

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in our Souls. Let us give up the Keys to Him, and desire Him to rule our Understandings, to know Nothing but Him, and what may stand with his Truth. Let us desire that He would rule in our Wills and Affections, sway all that is in us; for that is his Meaning, when He says, *Open to Me*, so that I may rule, as in mine own House, as the Husband rules in his Family, and a King in his Kingdom. He will have all yielded up to Him.

THE Reason why Men are so loth to open to *Christ* is, because He requires all. But what shall we lose by giving all to Him? Do we entertain *Christ* to our Loss? Doth He come empty? No, He comes with all Grace. His Goodness is a communicative, diffusive Goodness. He comes to spread his Treasures, to enrich the Heart with all Grace and Strength to bear all Afflictions, to encounter all Dangers, to bring Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. He comes, indeed, to make our Hearts, as it were, a Heaven. Do but consider this, He comes not for his own Ends; but to empty his Goodness into our Hearts. And if we wait we lose Nothing thereby, but are Gainers by it. The longer we wait, He comes with more abundant Grace and Comfort in the End, and shews Himself more rich and bountiful.

CONSIDER we next the sweet and friendly Compellations that *Christ* uses to his Church, in order to gain Admittance: *Open to me my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my Undeified.*

HERE *Christ* first addresses the Church as his Sister. We observed before, that the Church of GOD is *Christ's* Sister and Spouse; we are knit to Him both by Consanguinity, and by Affinity. The

nearest Affinity is Marriage, and the nearest Consanguinity is Sister. So that there are all Bonds to knit us to *Christ*: Whatsoever is strong [in any Bond, He knits us to Him by it. Is there any Love in an Husband, a Brother, a Mother, a Friend? Is there any Love scattered in any Relation? Gather it all into one, and all that Love, and a thousand Times more, is in *Christ*; therefore He styles Himself in all those sweet Relations, to shew that He hath the Love of all. Will a Sister shut out a Brother, when the Brother comes to visit her, and do her all Good? That comes and saith, Open to me my Sister? If the Sister should shut out the Brother, were it not most unnatural? And is it not monstrous in Grace? Remember that *Christ* hath the same Affections, to account us Brothers and Sisters now in Heaven, as He had when He was upon the Earth: For after his Resurrection (saith He to his Disciples) *I go to my GOD and your GOD, to my Father, and to your Father*; He calls Himself our Brother, having one common Father in Heaven, and one Spirit, and one Inheritance.

HE next calls her, *My Love*; that is, My Beloved, whom I love with the strongest Bowels of Affection. *Christ's* Love is so great to his Church and Children, and so continual to it, that his Church and People, and every Christian Soul is the Seat of his Love. He loves all his Creatures, they have all some Beams of his Goodness, (which He must needs love,) therefore He loves them as Creatures; and as they are more or less capable of a higher Degree of Goodness; but for his Church and Children, they are his Love indeed.

BUT what is the Ground of such Love? He loves us, because He sees his own Graces in us: He loves what is his in us. Before we are actually his, He loves

loves us with a Love of *good Will*, to wish all Good to us; but when we have any Thing of his Spirit, that our Natures are altered, He loves us with a Love of *Friendship*; with the Love of an *Head*, *Husband*, *Friend*. He loves his own Image.

IF we consider also what He hath done and suffered for her, we may well say the Church is his Love. He called us when we resisted; and then also He justified us, and cloathed us with his own Righteousness, and after feeds us with his own Body. As the Soul is the most excellent Thing in the World, so He hath provided for it the most excellent Dainties and Ornaments. But we shall never see fully what his Love is, till we be all in one Place, till we meet Him in the Mansions of Bliss and Glory, whither He is gone before to prepare a Place for us. It were an infinite Argument to follow, to shew the Love of *Christ*, which is beyond all Knowledge; it is too large for us to know all the Dimensions of it, which we should ever think, speak, and meditate of; because the Soul is then in the most fit Temper to serve, love, and glorify God, when it is most apprehensive of his great Love.

THE Love of *Christ* to us-ward, is a *free* Love, a *preventing* Love. He loved us before we could love Him; He loved us when we resisted Him, and were his Enemies. Likewise, it is a most tender Love, as you have it, *Isa.* xlix. 15. *Can a Mother forget her sucking Child? If she could, yet will I not forget thee: Thou art written on the Palms of my Hands.* He hath us in his Heart, in his Eye, in his Hand, in a Mother's Heart, and beyond it; He hath a tender Eye and a powerful Hand to maintain his Church.

THERE is no Love comparable to this Love of *Christ*, which is above the Love of Women, of Father, or Mother; therefore he gave Himself (the best Thing in Heaven or in Earth) to shew his Love. When He was GOD equal with his Father, He loved his Church, and gave Himself for it. How could He discover his Love beter than to take our Nature? How could He come nearer to us, than by being incarnate, so to be Bone of our Bone, and Flesh of our Flesh? Love draws Things nearer wheresoever it is; It drew the Son of GOD out of Heaven to the Womb of the Virgin, there to be incarnate, and after that, not only to be a Man, but a miserable Man, because we could not be his Spouse unless He purchased us by his Death.

How sweet was the Love of *Christ* to heal us not by searing, or lancing, but by making a Plaster of his own Blood, which He poured out for those that shed it in Malice and Hatred? What a wondrous Love is it, that He should pour forth Tears for those that shed his Blood? That He prayed for those that persecuted Him? And what wondrous Love is it now that He sympathizeth with us in Heaven, accounting the least Harm that is done to the least Member He hath, as done to Himself? Saul, Saul, *why persecutest thou Me?* And that He should take us into one Body with Himself. And He doth not content Himself with any Thing that He can do for us here; but his Desire is, that we may be one with Him more and more, and be forever with Him in the Heavens. We may especially know his Love by this, that it draws us upwards, and makes us heavenly minded; it makes us desire further and further Communion with Him. There is an attractive Force in *Christ's* Love; wheresoever it is, it draws the Heart and Affections after it.

LET

LET us then often warm our Hearts with the Consideration hereof, because all our Love is from this Love of his. Oh! the wonderful Love of GOD, that both such transcendent Majesty, and such infinite Love should dwell together! We say, Majesty and Love never dwell together, because, Love is an Abasing of the Soul to all Services. But herein it is false; for here Majesty and Love dwell together in the Heart of one *Christ*; which Majesty hath stooped as low, as his Almighty Power could give Leave. Nay, it was an Almighty Power that He could stoop so low, and yet be GOD keeping his Majesty still: For GOD to become Man, to hide his Majesty for a while, not to be known to be GOD, and to hide it so far as to die for us. What an almighty Power was this, that could go so low, and yet preserve Himself GOD still? Yet this we see in our blessed Saviour. The greatest Majesty met with the greatest Abasement that ever was, and all out of Love to our poor Souls. There was no Abasement that ever was so low as that of *Christ* for us, to want for a Time even the Comfort of the Presence of his Father: For Him to live so long out of Heaven, and oftentimes without Comfort, that He might be a Sacrifice for our Sins, what a Condescending was this? It is said, *Psal.* cxiii. 6, That GOD *stoops to behold the Things done here below*. It is indeed a wondrous Condescending that GOD will look upon Things below; but that He should become Man, and suffer as He did here, this is Humility to Astonishment. We think Humility is not a Grace becoming the Majesty of GOD: It is not indeed; but there is some Resemblance of that Grace in *Christ*, that He should vail Himself with Flesh, and all out of Love to us. The Consideration of these Things is wondrous effectual, as to strengthen Faith, so to kindle Love.

NEXT follows, *My Dove*. When *Christ* was baptized, the Holy Ghost appeared in the Shape of a Dove, to discover, that *Christ* should have the Disposition of a Dove, and be meek and gentle; as likewise to shew what his Office should be. For even as the Dove in *Noah's Ark* was sent out and came again to the Ark with an Olive Branch, to shew that the Waters were abated: So *Christ* was to come with an Olive Leaf of Peace and Reconciliation in his Mouth, to shew that God's Wrath was appeased. Now the Spirit that framed Him to be like a Dove, frames the Church to be like a Dove; as the Ointment that was poured on *Aaron's Head* ran down upon the Skirts of his Garments.

THE Church is compared to a Dove, 1. Because it hath the like Disposition as is found in a Dove. There is some Good in all Creatures; there is none but hath a Beam of God's Majesty, of some Attribute; but some more than others. There is an Image of Virtue even in the inferior Creatures. Wherefore the Scriptures send us to them for many Virtues; as the Sluggard to the Ant: And indeed we may see the true Perfection of the first Creation, more in the Creatures than in ourselves; for there is no such Degeneration in any Creature, as there is in Man.

THE first Property of a Dove I shall mention, is Meekness: And the Church is meek both to God and Man, not given to Murmurings and Revenge. Hereby we shew ourselves to have the Spirit of *Christ*. And this Grace disposeth us to a nearer Communion with God, than other Graces: It is a Grace that God most delights in, and would have his Spouse to be adorn'd with. *Moses*, we read, was a mighty Man in Prayer; and a special Means to fit him thereunto, was, he was the Meekest Man

Man on Earth. Therefore in that Grace we must especially be like this meek Creature, which hath no Way to revenge itself.

AGAIN the Dove is a simple Creature, without Guile. There is a Simplicity that is sinful, when there is no Mixture of Wisdom in it; and there is a Simplicity wherewith GOD is simple: There is Nothing contrary in Him; there is no Mixture of any Thing opposite: So there is a good Simplicity in us, when there is no Mixture of Fraud, no Duplicity in the Soul. In this we are to be like Doves.

AGAIN, this Creature is a faithful Creature; that is mainly here aimed at; it is faithful to the Mate: So the Christian, by the Spirit of GOD, is made faithful to *Christ*; keeps the Judgment chaste, is not tainted with Errors and Sins; keeps his Affections chaste likewise, sets nothing in his Heart above *Christ*; *Whom bath he in Heaven but Him, and what is there on Earth he desires besides Him?*

AGAIN, this Creature is of a neat Disposition; it will not lodge where it shall be troubled with Stench; and it likewise feeds on pure Grain: So the Christian Soul in this Respect is like a Dove, that will not feed upon sinful Pleasures, but upon *Christ* and spiritual Things. A natural Man feedeth upon Dust, Earth and earthly Things; but a Christian will not feed on that which is base and earthly, but upon heavenly and spiritual Things.

AGAIN, 2. The Church is compared to a Dove, on Account of its mournful, suffering Condition. The Dove is molested by all the Birds of Prey, it being the common Prey of all other ravenous Birds. So the poor Church of GOD is persecuted and molested.

BUT,

BUT, what Defence hath GOD's Church? Why none, but Flight: Even as the Dove hath Nothing but Flight; it hath no Talons to wound. So we are to fly to GOD as to our Mountain, fly to the Ark that GOD may take us in. The Church of GOD hath no other Refuge, but to be housed in GOD and *Christ*, her Ark.

A MOURNING State is likewise generally the Lot of the Church; as *Hezekiah* saith of himself, *Is. xxxviii. He mourned as a Dove, and chattered like a Crane.* She, like the *Turtle*, mourns in all Afflictions, Desertions and Molestations of wicked Men; she mourns to GOD, who hears the Bemoanings of his own Spirit in them; and woe to all other Birds, the Birds of Prey, when the *Turtles* mourn because of their Cruelty; it is a Presage of Ruin to them, when they force the *Turtle* to Sorrow and Mourning. So much for the Title of *Dove*.

THE last Compellation is, *My Undeiled.* The Church is undeiled, especially in that it is the Spouse of *Christ*, and cloathed with the Robes of his Righteousness. For there is an Exchange as soon as ever we are united to *Christ*; our Sins are laid upon Him, and his Righteousness is made ours.

CHRIST and his Church are not to be considered as two, when we speak of this Undeiledness, but as one. And the Church having *Christ* with all that is *Christ's*, they have the Field, and the Pearl in the Field together; and *Christ* giving Himself to the Church, He gives his Righteousness and his Perfection; all is the Church's. The Conscience knows its own Imperfection: So it is deiled, and accuseth of Sin: Yet as it looks to *Christ*, it sees itself pure, and purged from all Sin. Here is the

the Victory of Faith, in the deepest Sense of Sin, Pollution and Defilement in ourselves, at the same Time, to see an absolute and perfect Righteousness in *Jesus Christ*. Herein is the Triumph of Faith whereby it answers GOD. And *Christ* who sees our Imperfections (but it is to purge and cleanse them away, not to condemn us for them) at the same Time sees us in his own Love, cloathed with his Righteousness, as one with Himself, endowed with whatsoever He hath; his Satisfaction and Obedience being ours, as verily as any Thing in the World is. Thus He looks on us, and thus Faith looks upon Him too, and together with the Sight and Sense of Sin, it apprehends Righteousness, perfect Righteousness, and so is undefiled

THIS is the main Point in Religion, and the Comfort of Christians to be lost in themselves, as it were, and to be only *found in Christ*, not having their own Righteousness, but the Righteousness of GOD in Him. This is a Mystery which none knows but a believing Soul: None see Corruption more, none see themselves freed more; they have an inward Sight to see Corruption, and an inward Faith to see GOD reconciled. And surely there can be no greater Honour to *Christ* than this, In the Sense of Sin, of Wants, Imperfections, Stains and Blemishes, to wrap ourselves in the Righteousness of *Christ*, with Boldness to go cloathed in the Garments of this our elder Brother to the Throne of Grace. This is an Honour to *Christ*, to attribute so much to his Righteousness, That being cloathed therewith, we can boldly break thro' the Fire of GOD's Justice, and all those terrible Attributes, when we see them all, as it were, satisfied fully in *Christ*: For *Christ* with his Righteousness could go thro' the Justice of GOD, having satisfied it to the full for us. And
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we being cloathed with this his Righteousness and Satisfaction, may go through too.

BUT besides that, there is another Quality in the Church, in Respect to which she is called *Undeiled*; that is, in Purity of Disposition, tending to Perfection. For we are chosen unto Perfection, and to be holy in his Sight, and perfectly holy, undeiled and pure.

WHAT did GOD aim at in choosing us? Did He aim at these imperfect Beginnings to rest there? No; we were chosen to Perfection: For as in this natural Life, with Regard to the Body, GOD purposed that we should not only have all the Limbs of Men, but grow from Infancy to Perfection: So no Question He intends for the Soul, that we should not only have the Lineaments of Christianity, a sanctified Judgement, with Affections in Part renewed; but He hath chosen us to entire Perfection.

AND indeed it is the Character of a judicious, believing Christian Soul, that he can value the Righteousness of *Christ* out of himself, labouring, living and dying, to appear in that, and yet comfort himself during this Conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit, that in Time this inherent Grace shall be brought to Perfection. And *Christ's* Desire is, that the Work of Grace should be perfected in us: The End of Redemption is, that He might purge his Church here, and make it a glorious Spouse in Heaven. He looks upon us, as we shall be e're long; and therefore we are said *to be dead to Sin*, while we are dying to it. As a Man, when he is condemned, and going to his Execution, is a dead Man: So there is a Sentence passed upon Sin and Corruption; it shall be abolished and die.

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Therefore it is dead in Sentence, and is dying in Execution. So we are said to *fit in heavenly Places with Christ*; because He means to bring us thither. Thus Faith looks upon *Christ*, and *Christ* looks thus upon us. This should comfort us in Weakness, that GOD regards us not in our present Imperfections, but as He means to make us e're long.

WHAT should we do then, if *Christ* doth make his Church thus, *his Love, his Dove, his Undeified*, but lay open our Souls to his Love, and reflect Love to Him again? This perpetual Intercourse between *Christ* and his Spouse, is her main Happiness here, and her eternal Happiness in Heaven. In looking on Him, who hath done so much for us, He shines on us, and we look back again upon Him. A Christian should say, My Love was crucified, my Love died, my Love is in Heaven: And for the Things on Earth, I love them, as they have a Beam of Him in them, as they lead me to Him; but He is my Love; there my Love is pitched, even upon Him. This is the Ground of these Scripture Phrases, *Our Conversation is in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ. And set your Affections on Things above.* Why? *Christ* our Love is there. The Soul is more where it loves, than where its Residence is. It dies, as it were, to other Things, and lives in the Thing it loves; therefore our Thoughts and Affections, our Joy and Delight, should be drawn up to *Christ*; for indeed his Love hath such a magnetick Force, that where it is, it will draw up the heavy Iron, the gross Soul, and make it heavenly; for there is a binding, a drawing Force in this excellent Affection of Love.

AGAIN: Since He accounts us undeified, because He means to make us so, and now looks on

us, as we shall be: In all our Infirmities, let us comfort ourselves thus; "It shall not be always thus with me; this Flesh of mine shall decay as *Saul's House*, and the Spirit at last shall conquer in all this. I am not chosen to this Beginning, to this conflicting Course of Life; I am chosen to Triumph, to Perfection of Grace. This is my Comfort, I shall get the better at last." Let us still rejoice, in that we are chosen to Sanctification, which is a little begun, being an Earnest of other Blessings. Let us not rest in the Pledge or in the Earnest, but labour for a further Pledge of more Strength and Grace: For those that have the Spirit of *Christ*, will strive to be as unspotted, and as heavenly as they can; to fit themselves for that heavenly Condition as much as may be; and because they cannot be in Heaven now, yet they will converse there as much as they can; and because they cannot be with such Company altogether, they will be as much as may be, labouring as they are able, to be that which they shall be hereafter. Imperfection contents them not; and therefore they pray still in the LORD's Prayer, *Thy Kingdom come*. Nothing contents them but Perfection.

WE come now to speak of the Inconveniencies that *Christ* suffered, which He lays before the Church in order to move her to open to Him: *My Head is filled with Dew, and my Locks with the Drops of the Night*. Wherein He shews what He suffered; which Sufferings are of two Sorts: 1. In Himself: 2. In his Ministers.

IN Himself, and in his own blessed Person what did He endure, while He went up and down doing Good? But more especially towards his latter End, his Head was not only filled with the Dew, but
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his Body with Drops of Blood. Drops of Blood came from Him, because of the Anguish of his Spirit, and the Sense of God's Wrath for our Sins. Yea, upon the Cross, what did He endure when under a Sense of God's Anger for our Sins? He cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And then 2. What does he suffer in his Ministers? How was He used in the Apostles that were after Him and in the Ministers of the Church ever since? What Indignities endured they in the Primitive Church, that were the Publishers of the Gospel? Those sweet Preachers, for inviting Men to open to *Christ*, were killed: So cruel is the Heart of carnal Men, that it offereth Violence to them that Love them most. What greater Love, than the Love of the Soul? Yet this is the Satanical Temper of Mens Hearts, they hate those Men most, that deal this Way most truly and lovingly with them. It is not that the Gospel is such an hard Message: It is the Word of Reconciliation, and the Word of Life; but the Heart hates it, because it would draw Men from their present Condition; and therefore, *Condemnation is come into the World, in that Men hate the Light, because their Works are evil*, Joh. iii. 19. Is there any Thing truly and cordially hated but Grace? And are any Persons heartily and cordially hated in the World so much as the Publishers of Grace, and the Professors of it? No. But why? Because they most of all upbraid, and meddle with the Corruptions of Men, that are dearer to them than their own Souls.

Now what Patience is there in *Christ* to suffer Himself in his Messengers and in his Children, to be thus used? And in that He bears so many Injuries, so many Affronts from us before we turn to Him, we should learn to imitate *Christ*; never to give over as long as God continues Life with any Ad-

vantage and Opportunity to do Good to any Soul, but wait, if GOD at any Time will give them Grace. And in that our Saviour *Christ*, here would thus set forth his Love, and his Patience in his Love, in bearing with us, it should win our Hearts with all Readiness and Thankfulness to receive Him, when He comes to work in our Souls. Let us not therefore be careless of our own Souls, but let it move our Hearts to melt towards Him.

LET us now consider the Excuses the Church made for not Opening immediately to her Beloved, as they are set down, Ver. 3. *I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my Feet, how shall I defile them?*

NOTWITHSTANDING all *Christ's* Perswasion, yet we find the Church draws back, and seems to have Reason so do. *I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on again to let Thee in? I have washed my Feet, (a Phrase taken from the Custom of those hot Countries) how shall I defile them to rise and open the Door to Thee? There is a spiritual Meaning herein; as if she had said, I have some Ease by this sleepy Profession, some Freedom from evil Tongues, and some Exemption from some Troubles I was in before. I was then too indiscreet; wilt Thou call me again to those Troubles that I have wisely avoided. No; I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my Feet, how shall I defile them? I am content to be as I am without further troubling myself. Thus the Church puts off *Christ*.*

THAT which is observable is this; That it is not an easy Matter to bring the Soul and *Christ* together into near Fellowship. We see here how the Church draws back; for Nature moves either
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not to yield at all to Duty, or to be cold and unsettled therein. Nature knows that a near Communion with *Christ* cannot stand with Favouring any Corruption, and therefore will do something, but not enough; it will yield to something, but not to that which it should do, to that Communion and Fellowship that we ought to have with *Christ*. To instance in some Particulars:

A CHRISTIAN'S Life should be nothing but a Communion with *Christ*, a Walking in the Spirit. He should adorn his Profession by a lively Performance of all Duty, and be exemplary to others; and should be in such a Frame, that he should *walk continually in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost*, undismayed, and undaunted, *and abound in the Fruits of the Spirit*, and do all the Good he can wheresoever he comes: He should *keep himself unspotted from the World*, go against the Stream, and be continually in such a Temper, that it should be the Joy of his Heart to be dissolved and to be with *Christ*. But will Nature endure this, think you? No, it will not. You shall see more particularly in this next Observation.

ONE Way, whereby our Nature hinders this Communion with *Christ*, and the Shining of a Believer in a Christian Course, is by false Pretences, Reasons and Excuses. The Flesh never wants Excuses and Pretences to shift and shuffle off Duties; there was never yet any careless sinful Course, but it had the Flesh to justify it with one Reason or other; there was never yet any came to Hell, but had some Pretence for coming thither: And therefore it is good to understand the Shifts of Nature, and the Pretences which it hath. As it is good to know the Truth of God, and of *Christ* revealed in his Word, so it is to know the False-

ness and Deceitfulness of our own Hearts. Every one hath his several Pretexes, as his State and Condition is. We think we should be Losers, if we give ourselves to that Degree of Goodness which others do; whereas GOD doth curse those Blessings which Men get with Neglect of Duty to Him. Whenever any one enters upon a Christian Course, how many Objections will be immediately brought? "Thou shalt lose the Favour of such an one." Never care for that Favour thou canst not keep with GOD's. The Favour of Man is a Snare, take Heed of that Favour that snares thee: Thou lovest their Favour and Company; but thou gainest the Favour of *Christ*, and Company of Angels. "Yea, but the World will rail on me, and reproach me with my old Sins." Care not: GOD will do thee Good for that; as *David* said, when *Shimei* cursed him. "Yea, but I shall lose my Pleasure:" Oh! but carnal Pleasures end in Death: They are at best but Pleasures of Sin for a Season; and thou shalt not lose by the Change; for *the Ways of Wisdom are Pleasant*: However outwardly it seems, yet there is a Paradise within. "But if I be thus precise, the Times are so bad, I shall be alone." Complain not of the Times when thou makest them worse. Thou shouldst make the Times better. The worse the Times are, the better be thou; for this is thy Glory, to be good in an evil Generation. What brings Destruction on GOD's People, but their Joining with the Wicked? When they joined with the Children of Men, then came the Flood.

THOSE likewise that are Worldly, have Excuses also: "But I must tend my Calling: *He that provides not for his Family, is worse than an Infidel.*" As if GOD had set up any Calling to hinder the Calling of Christianity: As if that were not the greatest Calling, and the best Part that will abide with us forever:

forever: As if it were not the Part of a Christian to redeem Time from his Calling to the Duties of Christianity. "I have no Time, say you, what will you have me to do?" Why, what Time had *David*? He meditated on the Law of GOD Day and Night; and yet he had the Affairs of a Kingdom on his Hands.

THUS every one as their State and Condition is, have several Pretences and Excuses. Those that are young say, "We have Time enough for these Things;" whereas, (besides the Uncertainty of Life) the Custom of Sin, the Engaging our Hearts deeper and deeper into the World, makes it a more difficult Thing to be a Christian. It more and more darkens our Understanding, and estrangeth our Affections from good Things. Time is a special Mercy; but when thou hast not Time only, but the Means, good Company, and good Motions, thou mayest never have such a Gale again; thy Heart may be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin. Again, who would want the Comforts of Religion even for the present? As *Austin* saith, *I have wanted thy Sweetness too long.* What Folly is it to want the Sweetness and Comfort of Religion, so long as we may have it?

OTHERS pretend, the Uncomfortableness of Religion; when as indeed, there is no sound Comfort without having our Hearts in a perfect Communion with *Christ*. There is no Pleasure like the Pleasure of serving GOD. As the Fire hath Light and Heat always in it; so there is no holy Action that we perform throughly, but, as it hath an Increase of Strength, so of Comfort and Joy annexed to it. There is a present Reward annexed to all Things that are spiritually good; they carry with them present Peace and Joy.

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THESE and a Thousand such like Discouragements Men frame to themselves. "My Health will not serve; I shall endanger my Life." There is a *Lion in the Way*, (saith the Sluggard) who, with his Excuses, *thinks himself wiser than the Wisest in the City*. There is none so wise as the Sluggard: For Belly Policy teacheth him a great many Excuses, which he thinks will go for Wisdom; because by them he thinks to sleep in a whole Skin: Yet he is but a Sluggard for all that; and though he plead, Yet a little While; Poverty (not only outward, but spiritual Poverty) and Barrenness of Soul, will come upon him as an armed Man.

BUT what Course should we take that we may attain a Relish of heavenly Things: so as not to loath religious Exercises, or put them off with Excuses?

FIRST, Resolve not to consult with Flesh and Blood: for it always counsels us for Ease; as *Peter* counselled *Christ*. We have a Nature in us like unto *Peter*; it still says, *Spare, Pity thyself*. If Men were in a City environed round with Enemies, would they consult with them what they should do for the Defence of the City? Were it not a mad Part? And is it not a greater Madness when Christians consult with Flesh and Blood what they should do in Duties of Obedience? We should take Heed therefore of consulting with our Enemy; of listening to the Counsel of Flesh and Blood; especially when the Matter comes to Suffering; for there of all other Things, Flesh and Blood doth draw back. Every one hath a *Peter* in himself, that saith, *Spare thyself*: Thou art indiscreet to venture thyself upon this and that Hazard. But where the Judgment is convinced of the Goodness of the Cause, go on, whatsoever the Suffering be.

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It is not necessary that we should live in Riches, Honours, Pleasures; but it is necessary that we should live good Christians. Therefore when Flesh and Blood objecteth, consult not with it: First, because it is an Enemy, and therefore is to be suspected: Secondly, because it is said, *Flesh and Blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*. There is no following of *Christ*, considering our Flesh is so full of Cavils and Excuses, unless we practise that heavenly Lesson, *to deny ourselves*, our whole self, our Wit and Reason, our Will and Affections in the Matters of GOD. Say Nay to all the Sluggishness of the Flesh. Silence all presently, as soon as ever they discourage thee from holy Ways. Consider whence they come; (which is enough) from GOD's and our Enemy, and the worst Enemy we have, that lieth in our own Bosom.

WITHALL, in spiritual Courses, let us arm ourselves with Resolution. First, conclude, It is so, or not so? Let our Judgments be convinced; and get Resolution from Soundness of Conviction, that such Things are good, and that they are best for us; and best for us at this Time; the sooner the better; that there is an absolute Necessity to have them, and that they are everlastingly good.

AND further, let us be able by sound Reasons to justify the Ways of GOD, and to answer Cavills, to give an Account of what we do to ourselves and others. To have Reasons ready from Scripture, is an excellent Thing; when we are able to justify whatsoever we do by the Word, against all the Quarrels of our own Hearts and others. When we are led to do Things only by the Example of others, then we are oftentimes put to it on the sudden by Temptations: Let us therefore labour to do Things upon good Grounds, and be able to justify all the Ways

Ways of Religion, by Reasons unanswerable, that may silence corrupt Nature, and stop the Mouth of the Devil himself.

AGAIN, let us be, not only inured to the Yoke of Religion, but likewise to endure Difficulties, Opposition and Hardship; as the Apostle stands upon it to *Timothy, To endure Hardship and Afflictions*. If the Thing be good and warrantable, neglect the Speeches of the World. What are the Speeches of a Company of Men in the State of Nature, that we should regard them so, as not to endure Hardship in such Things, of the Goodness whereof we are convinced? But in these Days Men take up a delicate Profession of Religion. Men will be religious, but they will suffer nothing. They will part with nothing, be at no Loss, suffer no Cross, be at no Pains with Religion. This delicate Profession (if any thing among us) threateneth the Removing of the Gospel we enjoy. How will they suffer Afflictions for the Gospel (if such Times come) that will not part with a corrupt Fashion, a Superfluity now? Here is a Profession of Religion indeed, that will not endure so much as a Check. This extreme Tenderneſs in the Matters of God and Salvation, is the Cause why many externally perish.

AGAIN, remember to do all Things to God, and not to Man; and then whatsoever Discouragement there is from Men, we should not be discouraged. We hear Men continually complain of others, that they are unthankful, and why should we do any thing for them? Why? Do it to God. Let us do Justice and shew Mercy, and God will accept it, tho' Men do not. It is best to have God's Reward. In this World it is good to meet with unthankful Persons, because else we should
meet

meet with our Reward here. 'It is good to do somewhat for GOD's Sake, and for Religion; let People be as thankful as they will, to say, I did it not altogether to you, but to GOD. If a Man regard the Discouragement of the World, he shall never do that which is good; People in the World are so unthankful to those that wish them best, and that do best to them. But if a Man do a Thing to GOD, and do it out of Duty and Conscience, he may hold on, tho' he have never so many Discouragements in the World.

LASTLY, let us help ourselves to go through all Discouragements, whatever they be, with setting the Glory to come before our Eyes. Let us look unto the Recompence of Reward, not to the present Discouragement. What makes a Soldier fight hard for Victory? The Sweetness of the Triumph. Consider the Issue which followeth a careful christian Life; a near and perfect Walking with GOD. Upon this Ground the Apostle exhorts us, *to be abundant in the Work of the LORD; knowing that our Labour is not in vain in the LORD.*

WE shall now see the Consequence of all those Excuses of the Church, whereby she puts off *Christ*; as it is set down, Ver. 4, 5, 6. *My Beloved put in his Hand by the Hole of the Door, and my Bowels were moved for Him. I rose to open to my Beloved, and my Hands dropped with Myrrh, and my Fingers with sweet-smelling Myrrh upon the Handles of the Lock. I rose to open to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone.*

THERE are three Things here observable: 1. The Consequence of the Church's Drowsiness; *Christ's* withdrawing Himself. 2. His gracious dealing when He withdrew Himself: And, 3. The Success

Success of *Christ's* Departure: which is set forth in these Instances, 1. The Church's Bowels were moved in her, which were hard before. 2. She rose up out of her Bed, wherein formerly she had composed herself to rest. And, 3. She seeks and calls after Him.

THE first doctrinal Point which is to be observ'd out of these Verses, is, That *Christ* doth sometimes leave his Children, as He did the Church here. But what Kind of Leaving is it? *Christ's* Withdrawings of Himself are either in Regard of outward or inward Comforts and Helps. 1. *Christ* leaves his Church sometimes, by taking away the Means of Salvation, the Ministry, or by taking away outward Comforts; which Withdrawing of his, especially if He accompany the Taking of them away with some Signs of his Displeasure, or Sense of his Anger, doth imbitter all Losses; when they come from *Christ*, as a Testimony of his Anger for our former Unkindness. 2. Sometimes his Forsaking is more inward; and that is double; either in Regard of Peace and Joy, inward Comfort that the Soul had wont to feel in the Ordinances by the Spirit of *Christ*; or in Regard of Strength and Assistance, when he leaves them to themselves to fall into some Sin. And that *Christ* thus leaves his Church, is true of all, both of the Body and of each particular Member.

BUT observe this second Point, that the Cause rests in ourselves why *Christ* withdraws Comfort from our Souls; and if we search our own Hearts, we shall find it so. And the usual Causes are these, 1. When we are unkind to *Christ*, and repel the sweet Motions of the Spirit: The Church used *Christ* unkindly; therefore He left her. 2. When

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we improve not the precious Means of Salvation that we enjoy: A Discontinuing of religious Exercises. He withdraws Himself from our Souls, when we neglect the Means, and stir not up the Graces of GOD's Spirit. 3. When we are careless of our Conversation or Company: This will cause a Strangeness between *Christ* and the Soul, when we cast ourselves imprudently into Company, in whom the Spirit is not. Evil Company is a great Damp; it causeth a Christian to lose his Comfort much. 4. When we linger after carnal Liberties and Ease. 5. When we yield to carnal Policy, and shifts to go on in a luke-warm Course. 6. When we linger after earthly Things and Comforts. When we prize not the Communion that should be between the Soul and *Christ*, as we ought; saying, *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And Thy Loving Kindness is better than the Life it self*; It is just with *Christ* to make Himself strange. Where Love is not esteemed, it is estranged. And, 7. When we tremble not at GOD's Judgments and Threatnings, and at the Signs of them.

THEREFORE if we do not enjoy more Acquaintance with *Christ* than we do, and walk more in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost; let us lay our Hand upon our Mouth, and justify *Christ*. It is just with thee to deal thus with me, that have dealt so unkindly with Thee. So to justify GOD, and accuse ourselves, is the best Way to recover spiritual Comfort.

A THIRD Point to be observed, is, tho' *Christ* leave us, upon our Drowfiness and unworthy Carriage towards Him, yet notwithstanding He leaves some Footsteps of his Grace upon the Soul. He stands at the Door and leaves Myrrh behind; something in the Heart that causeth a Hankering after
Z Him.

Him. So here, howsoever *Christ* had withdrawn Himself from the Church, yet He left behind Him a Spirit of Grace, to affect her Heart with Sorrow, and Shame, and to stir up her Endeavours to seek after Him, *I rose to open to my Beloved, and my Hands dropt Myrrh, and my Fingers sweet-smelling Myrrh.*

OBSERVE here, that *Christ's* Grace is the Cause of our Grace. He first leaves Myrrh, and then her Fingers drop Myrrh. *Out of his Fulness we receive Grace for Grace*; that is, our Grace is answerable to the Grace of *Christ*. We have all from Him; Favour for his Favour; because He is beloved, we are beloved; we have the Grace of Sanctification from Him; He was sanctified with the Spirit, therefore we are sanctified; He is the Son of GOD, therefore we are Sons; He is the Heir of Heaven, therefore we are Heirs; so that of his Grace, it is we receive all; we have our Myrrh from his Myrrh. And this should teach us, the Necessity of Dependence upon *Christ*, for whatsoever we have or would have: And likewise of endeavouring after Grace; because we find the Church's Fingers dropped Myrrh when she opened the Door, and stirred up herself to Endeavour. When first her Bowels were moved, then she hastens to the Door, and then her Hands dropped Myrrh; so that we find Experience of the Grace of *Christ*, especially when we stir up ourselves to Endeavour. *Arise and be doing, and the LORD shall be with thee* (saith David to Solomon); so let us rouse up ourselves to endeavour, and we shall find a gracious Presence of *Christ*, and a blessed Assistance of the Spirit. *To him that hath shall be given*: if he exercise and stir up the Grace of GOD in him. Therefore let us stir up the Graces of GOD in us; let us fall upon Actions of Obedience, second them with Prayer; whatsoever we pray for and desire, set
upon

upon the Practice thereof. We mock GOD, except we endeavour for that we desire. Keep not off and say, I am dead and drowsy, therefore I shall be still so. You are deceived: Fall upon Obedience and Practising of holy Duties, and in the Midst thereof thou shalt find the Presence and Assistance of GOD's Spirit, that will comfort thee.

THIS fourth Point likewise ariseth from the fore-mentioned Verses, That the Church, by Reason of this gracious Dealing of *Christ*, leaving somewhat behind Him, is sensible of her former Unkindness, and restless, till she have recover'd her former Communion with Him. For that Expression, *He put his Finger in by the Hole of the Door*, implies, that *Christ* before He departed left by his Spirit an Impression on the Church's Heart, which deeply affected her to seek after Him.

THE Fingers spoken of, are nothing but the Power of his Spirit, (as the usual Scripture Phrase is, *This is GOD's Finger, GOD's mighty Hand*) without which all Ordinances are ineffectual.

IT follows, *her Bowels were moved after Him*; which implies a Work of the Spirit upon her, whereby her Heart was moved to seek after *Christ*. Behold in this his Dealing the Mercy of *Christ*: He will not suffer the Church to be in a State of Security, but will rather bring her to a State of Grief and Sorrow. So she saith of herself, *My Bowels were moved in me*; that is, My Heart was affected, full of Grief for my unkind Dealing with *Christ*. Hereby those Affections were stirred up that were before asleep.

GOD hath planted Affections in us, and joined them with Conscience, as the Executioners with

the Judge: So that when Conscience accuseth of any Sin, either of Omission or Commission, Affections are ready to be the Executioners within us. Thus to prevent eternal Damnation, God hath set up a Throne in our own Hearts to take Revenge by our own Affections, godly Sorrow and Mourning.

WE may observe hence, that even Sins of Omission bring Shame and Sorrow; and in the Issue through *Christ's* sanctifying them, these which they breed, consume the Parent; that is, Sin brings forth Shame and Grief, which are a Means to cure Sin. Would we therefore prevent Shame, and Grief: Take Heed then of Security, the Cause that leads to them; yea, of Sins of Omission, wherein there is more Danger then in Sins of Commission.

LET us esteem as slightly as we will of Sins of Omission, and Carelessness, they are enough to bring Men to Hell. It is not required only that we do no Harm, and keep ourselves from outward Evils; but we must do Good in a good Manner, and have a Care to be fruitful and watchful. A dead secure State is so hateful to God, that He will not endure it; it either goes before some great Sin, Cross, Affliction, or Judgment.

My Bowels were moved in me, saith the Church: And good Reason; it was a suitable Correction to the Sin wherein she offended: For *Christ's* Bowels were turned towards her in Love; in which Case she neglecting Him, it was fit she should find Moving of Bowels in another Sense; in Shame and Mourning. *Christ* here leaves her to seek after Him, that had waited and attended her Leisure before.

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It follows; *My Soul failed when He spake*: that is, her Soul failed when she remembered what He had spoke, when He stood at the Door, and said, *Open to me my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my Unde-filed, for my Head is wet with the Dew, and my Locks with the Drops of the Night.* When God's Spirit had wrought upon her, then she remember'd what *Christ* had said. All those sweet Allurements were effectual now unto her; especially when she saw that after those Allurements *Christ* had withdrawn Himself; (for that is the Meaning of these Words, *My Soul failed when He spake unto me.*) He did not speak now; but her Soul failed after He spake; for so it should be read; that is, after she remember'd his Speech to her; for now when she opened He was not there, therefore He could not speak to her.

LABOUR we all of us then to be diligent and careful to hear and attend upon the Ordinances of God; for howsoever what we hear is not effectual for the present, but seems as dead Seed cast into the Heart, yet GOD will give it a *Body after*, as the Apostle speaks, at one Time or other. That which we hear now, the Holy Ghost will bring to our Remembrance when we stand in most Need of it.

My Soul failed when He spake, saith the Church; that is, she was in a spiritual Swoon upon his Withdrawing: Whence we may observe, that *Christ* doth leave his Church sometimes; so that their Hearts fail them for Want of his Presence.

THIS Fainting of the Soul is sometimes upon an Apprehension, as if GOD and *Christ* were become Enemies; sometimes for the Absence of *Christ's* Love, tho' it feel no Anger: Even as a Husband not looking lovingly upon his Wife as he used to

do, is enough to cast her down. Nay, moreover when a Man finds not the Assistance in holy Duties as formerly; when his Heart is shut up, and he cannot pray as usual; when he finds he cannot bear Afflictions with wonted Patience; when he hears not the Word of GOD with that Delight and Profit as he was wont; when he feels not that Relish in the Ordinances of GOD as he was wont; he concludes, Certainly *Christ* hath withdrawn Himself, GOD hath hid his Face; whereupon he is cast down, his Spirits fail.

SUMMER and Winter arise from the Presence and Absence of the Sun: So what makes the Summer and Winter in the Soul, but the Absence or Presence of *Christ*? What makes some so vigorous beyond others, but the Presence of the Spirit? As it is in Nature, so it is here; the Presence of *Christ* is the Cause of all spiritual Life and Vigour: When He withdraws his Spirit a little, the Soul fails. The Child of GOD cannot be content without the Presence of GOD and of his Spirit enlightning, quickning, strengthening and blessing him. When he finds not his Presence, when *Christ* his Life is absent, he is presently discouraged. When a Man's Life fails, all fails. When therefore a Man finds his spiritual Taste not as it was before, then he is never quiet 'till he hath recovered his Life again.

UPON the Church's Swooning at the Absence of *Christ*, she next acquaints us of the Method she took for the Recovery of his Presence: She falls to Prayer. Action follows Affection. After her Bowels are moved, she ariseth and openeth; but her Beloved being gone, she further manifests the Sincerity of her Affection, by making after Him. *I sought Him*, but for the present in vain; whereupon

on the complains, *But I could not find Him: I called, but He made no Answer.*

ONE of the greatest Discouragements of all other is, when Prayer hath no Answer. This is the Complaint, but indeed an Error, of the Church; for *Christ* did hear the Church, tho' He seemed to turn his Back.

Now how shall we carry ourselves when our Hearts fail of that we seek for; when we pray without Success, and find not a present Answer. 1. We must hope against Hope. The Nature of Faith is to break through all Opposition, to see the Sun behind a Cloud; nay to see one contrary in another, Life in Death, a Calm in a Storm. 2. Stir up your Grace; for as Nature joining with Physick helps it to carry away the malignant Humours; so by the Remainder of the Spirit that is in us, let us set all our Graces on Work untill we have carried away that, which offends the Soul, and not sink under the Burden: For this is a special Time for the exercising of Faith, Hope, Love, Diligence, Care and Watchfulness.

THE Church after setting down her own Exercise in her Desertion, sets out the outward ill Dealing she met with, and that from those that should have been her greatest Comforters. *The Watchmen that went about the City found Me, they wounded Me; the Keepers of the Walls took away my Vail from Me.*

THUS we see how Trouble follows Trouble; One Depth calls upon another. Inward Desertion and outward Affliction go many Times together. The Troubles of the Church many Times are like *Job's* Messengers; they come fast one upon

upon another; because GOD means to perfect the Work of Grace in their Hearts, all this is for their Good. The sharper the Winter is, the better the Spring.

LEARN hence first, that it is no easy Thing to be a Christian. We see here, after the Church had betrothed herself to *Christ*, and entertained Him in her Garden, she falls into a State of Security and Sleep, whence *Christ* labours to rouse her up: Then she useth Him unkindly; after which He withdraws Himself, even so far that her Heart fails her; then (as if it were not enough) the Watchmen that should have looked to her, smite her, wound her, and take away her Vail. See here the Variety of Changes in a Christian, not long in one State.

BUT you will say, *All Christians are not thus tossed up and down, deserted of GOD, and persecuted of others*, I answer, indeed there is Difference. But whence comes that Difference? It is a Mystery of the Sanctuary, which no Man in the World can give a Reason of; why of Christians, equally beloved of GOD, some should have a fairer Passage to Heaven, others more rugged. It is sufficient for us if GOD will bring us any Way to Heaven, as the blessed Apostle saith, *If by any Means I might attain to the Resurrection of the Dead*.

“BUT who are the Watchmen here meant?” They are especially Governors of State and Church. The Expression is taken from the Custom of Cities that are beleagured: They have Watchmen to descry the Danger they are liable unto: So Magistrates are Watchmen of the State; Ministers are the Watchmen for Souls, watching over them for Good.

“BUT

“BUT why doth GOD use Watchmen?” Not for any Defect of Power in Him; but 1. For Demonstration of his Goodness; for He is the great Watchman, who watcheth over our Commonwealths, Churches and Persons; He hath an Eye that never sleeps; *He that watcheth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps*; He manifesteth his Goodness in that He will use Variety of subordinate Watchers. And likewise 2. To shew his Power in using many Instruments; and his Care for us.

AND in this, that GOD hath set over us Watchers (Ministers especially) it implies that our Souls are in Danger. Indeed there is nothing in the World so beset as the Soul of a poor Christian. Who hath so many Enemies as a Christian? And among them all, the worst is nearest to him, even himself. Therefore there must needs be Watchmen to discover the Deceits of *Satan* and his Instruments, and of our own Hearts; to discover the Dangers of *Jerusalem*, and the Errors and Sins of the Times wherein we live.

COME we now to the Carriage of the Watchmen; they smote the Church and wounded her many Ways (though it be not discovered here in particular) as with their ill Life, and sometimes with corrupt Doctrine, and other whiles with bitter Words, and unjust Censures; as we see in the Story of the Church, especially in the *Romish* Church: But not to speak of them, come we nearer Home, and we may see amongst ourselves those that are Watchmen, and should give us Encouragement, who smite and wound the Church and take away her Vail.

THEY took away the Vail; that is, that where-with the Church was covered. You know in the
Times

Times of the Old Testament a Vail was that which covered Women; and it was in one Respect a Token of Modesty and Subjection; in another an honourable Ornament. So then the Watchmen took away that which made the Church comely, and laid her open, and as it were naked. Now the Church's Vail is taken away by false Watchmen:

1. As it is a Token of Subjection, when by their false Doctrines they labour to draw People from *Christ*, and their Subjection to Him. They that draw the People to themselves (as in *Popish* Churches) that desire to sit high in their Consciences, and so make their Church undutiful, take away the Vail of Subjection, and so force *Christ* to punish the Church. And 2. As the Vail is for Honour and Comeliness, so the Watchmen take it away, when they take away the Credit and Esteem of the Church, when they lay open the Infirmitiess and Weaknesses of the Church.

It is strange that the Watchmen should do this, yet notwithstanding oftentimes it falls out so, that those who by Place are Watchmen, are the bitterest Enemies of the Church. Who were bitterer Enemies to her in *Christ's* Time than the Scribes, Pharisees and Priests? And who in the Time of the Prophets, than false Priests and Prophets?

Now what is the Reason, that those Men that should be Encouragers are rather Dampers of the Church's Zeal? Sometimes it falls out from a Spirit of Envy in them at the Graces of God's People, which are wanting in themselves. Sometimes from Idleness, which makes them hate all such as provoke them to Diligence.

THIS should teach us, to be in Love with *Christ's* Government, and to see the Vanity of all Things here below, tho' they be never so excellent in their Institution. Such is the Poison of Man's Heart, and the Malice of *Satan*, that they turn the Edge of the best Things against the Good of the Church. What is more excellent than Magistracy, yet many Times the Point of the Sword is directed the wrong Way. So Ministers are *Christ's* Ambassadors, and should, as *Christ* would do, strengthen the feeble Knees and bind up the Broken-hearted: But alas! we see the Edge of the Ordinance is often turned another Way, by the corrupt, proud, unbroken Hearts of Men, and the Malice of *Satan*.

AGAIN, it should teach us, not to think the worse of any for the Disgraces of the Times. The Watchmen here take away the Vail of the Church, and her Forwardness is disgraced by them: Take Heed therefore we entertain not rash, hard Thoughts of others, upon the Entertainment they find in the World, or among those that have a Standing in the Church; for so we shall condemn *Christ* Himself, who was judged of the Priests, Scribes and Pharisees in his Times. And this hath been the Lot of the Church in all Ages; the true Members thereof were called *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*; the Vail was taken off. It is the Pride of Man's Heart, that when it cannot raise itself by its own Worth, it will endeavour to raise itself by the Ruin of others Credit through lying Slanders; as was the Devil's Practice: So the Credit of the Church must be first taken away, and then she is wounded. It is a usual Proverb, Those that kill a Dog make the World believe he was mad first: So they always first traduced the Church to the World, and then persecuted her.

IN this Case, it is the Innocency of the Dove, that is to be laboured for, and withall the Wisdom of the Serpent. And if that will not avail, (as it may not; for *Christ* was Wisdom itself, yet He suffered most) when Wisdom and Innocency will not avail to ward off Sufferings; then we must labour for Patience, knowing that one Hair of our Heads shall not fall to the Ground without the Providence of the Almighty: Only let us commend our Case, as *Christ* did, by Faith and Prayer to GOD that judgeth, and leave all to Him.

AFTER all this ill Usage that the Church met with from the Watchmen, she carries her Complaint to other Professors less eminent than they: *I charge you, O Daughters of Jerusalem, if you see my Beloved, that you tell Him, that I am sick of Love.* Whence we may learn: That if we find not Comfort in one Means, we must have Recourse to another. If we find not *Christ* in this Ordinance, seek Him in that; and perhaps we shall find Him where we least thought of Him. Sometimes there is more Comfort in the Society of poor Christians, than of the Watchmen themselves.

IN this solemn Charge here given by the Church, we have observable, First, the Parties charged, the Daughters of *Jerusalem*; the Daughters of the Church, which is called *Jerusalem*, from these Resemblances between *Jerusalem* and the Church; as, 1. *Jerusalem was a City compact in itself* (as the Psalmist saith); so is the Church, the Body of *Christ*. *Jerusalem* was chosen from all Places of the World, to be the Seat of GOD: So the Church is the Seat of *Christ*; He dwells there, in the Hearts of his Children. In *Jerusalem* Records were kept of the Names of all the Citizens there: So the Names of all the true Citizens of the Church
are

are written in the Book of Life in Heaven. The Daughters of *Jerusalem*, therefore, are the true Members of the Church, and fed in the Church.

WE have likewise observable, Secondly, The Charge given to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, *If you find my Beloved, tell Him, that I am sick of Love*: that is, I charge you, as you love me your Sister, as you love *Christ*, as you tender my Case that am thus used, *tell Him that I am sick of Love*.

THE Point observable here is, That at such Times as we find not our Spirits enlarged, then is a Time to desire the Prayers and Help of others. Those thrive the best that have most Prayers made for them, that have a Stock going in every Country. There is a wondrous Force in the Prayers of Christians one for another. See how the great Apostle *Paul* desires the *Romans*, that they would contend with God by their joint Prayers for Him. So he desires the *Thessalonians* to pray for him, *that he might be delivered from unreasonable Men*. It is usual with him to say, *Pray, pray, and for us too*. A true Christian's Prayers are of much Esteem with God. Despise none in this Case: For such are gracious in the Court of Heaven. Our blessed Saviour Himself, when He was in the Garden, tho' his poor Disciples were sleepy, yet would have their Society and Prayers.

I AM sick of Love. The more excellent the Thing is that is loved, the more Contentment there is in Communion with it; and where it is hindred, there is Disquiet: Answerable to the Contentment in Enjoying, is the Grief in Parting. The Happiness of the Church consisting in Society with *Christ*, it is her Misery to be deprived of Him.

There are few in the World sick of this Disease: I would there were more sick of the Love of *Christ*.

TALK with a Man that is in any Heat of Affections, you talk with one that is not at Home. The Soul is more where it loves than where it dwells. Surely where the Love of *Christ* is in any Strength, it draws up the Soul, so that a Man oftentimes in his Calling and ordinary Employments doth not heed them, but passeth thro' the World, as a Man at Random; he regards not the Things of the World; for *Christ* is gotten into his Heart, and draws all the Affections to Himself. Where Love is strong, it cares not what it suffers for the Party loved; nay, it glories in it. As it is said of the Disciples, when they were scourged for preaching the Gospel, it was a Matter of Glory to them. Where the Love of *Christ* is, Labour is no Labour, Suffering is no Suffering, Trouble is no Trouble.

LABOUR we therefore every Day more and more, to have larger and larger Affections to *Christ*. The more a Man loves *Christ*, the more joyful he is, when he thinks of those mutual Embracings, when *Christ* and his Soul shall meet in Heaven: In the mean Time he thankfully frequents the Places where *Christ* is present in the Word and Sacrament.

UPON this Charge of the Church to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, they reply unto her, wondering at her Earnestness: *What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, O thou fairest among Women? What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*

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THE Church is the fairest among Women in the Judgment of *Christ*, so He calls her, *Can. i. 8. O thou fairest among Women*; and here the Fellow-Members of the Church term her so too.

BUT how cometh she to be thus fair? 1. In Regard that she is cloathed with *Christ's* Robes. We were all ennobled with the Image of GOD at the first; but after we had sinned, we were bereft of that Image; therefore now all our Beauty must be Cloathing, which is not natural but borrowed. The Beauty of the Church now comes from the Head of the Church, *Christ*; she shines in the Beams of her Husband; (as the Woman cloathed with the Sun, mentioned *Rev. xii.*) not only in Justification, but in Sanctification also. 2. She is fair, as from *Christ's* imputative Righteousness, so from his Righteousness inherent in her, the Graces she hath from Him; for of Him we receive Grace for Grace. There is never a Grace but it is beautiful and fair; for what is Grace, but the Beams of *Christ*, the Son of Righteousness? So that all must be fair that comes from the first Fair, all beautiful that comes from the first Beauty.

“BUT she is black.” She is so indeed, and she confesseth herself to be so, *Cant. i. 5. I am Black but Comely*; she is indeed Black in Regard of the Afflictions and Persecutions she meets with in this World. Black, in Regard of Scandals; for the Devil hates the Church more than all Societies in the World; therefore in the Society of the Church there are often more Scandals than in other People; as the Apostle tells the *Corinthians*, there was Incest among them, the like was not among the Heathen. She is black also, through the Envy of the World, that looks more at the Church's Faults than Vertues. Lastly, she is black, in Respect of her In-

firmities, being subject to Weakness and Passions as other Men. The Beauty of the Church is inward and altogether undiscerned to the carnal Eye:

WHAT is thy Beloved, more than another Beloved? We see, these of the Church here were stirred up by the Examples of other Members of the Church to be inquisitive after *Christ*. Hence observe, there is a wondrous Force in the Examples of Christians to stir up one another.

LET us labour therefore to be exemplary to others, and to express the Graces of GOD; for thus we shall do more than we are aware. There is a secret Influence in good Example, though a Man say nothing. There is a Way to profit from a good Man, though he hold his Peace: His Course of Life speaks loud. We owe this to all, even to them that are without, to do them so much Good, as to give them a good Example; and we wrong them when we do not, and hinder their coming on by an evil, or a dead Example.

LET this be one Motive to stir us up to it, that answerable to the Good we do in this Kind shall be our Comfort in Life and Death, and our Reward after Death. For the more spreading our Good is, either in Word, Life, or Conversation, the more our Consciences shall be settled in the Consideration of a Life well spent. Our Reward shall be answerable to our Communication and Diffusion of Good. Otherwise, it will lie heavy on the Conscience, not only in this Life, but at the Day of Judgment, and after, when we shall think not only of the personal Ill that we stand guilty of, but exemplary Ill also.

It should move us also to look to all good Examples. Wherefore are good Examples, but that we should

should follow them? We shall not only be answerable for Abuse of Knowledge, but also of good Examples we have had and neglected. Doth God kindle Lights for us, and shall we not walk by their Light? It is a Sin not to consider the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Heavens, the Works of Nature and Providence; much more not to consider the Works of Grace.

BUT let us observe here, The Church coming to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*, and speaking of *Christ*, her Beloyed, that she is *sick of Love*; the *Daughters of Jerusalem* are inquisitive to know *Christ* more and more. Here is the Benefit of holy Conference. One Thing draws on another, and that draws on another, till at length the Soul is warmed with the Consideration of heavenly Things. Sometimes though we know that which we ask of others as well as they do; yet notwithstanding, good Speeches will draw us to know it better, by giving Occasion to speak more of it, wherewith the Spirit works more effectually and imprints it deeper; so that it shall be a more rooted Knowledge than before. For that doth Good that is graciously known; and that is graciously known that the Spirit seals upon our Souls. Perhaps the Knowledge I have is not yet sealed sufficiently, it is not rooted by Conference. Though I hear the same Things again, yet I may hear them in a fresh Manner, and so I may have it sealed deeper than before. Experience finds these Things to be true.

CHRISTIANS should be inquisitive of the right Path which leads to Heaven; inquisitive of the Excellency of *Christ*: It is good to raise Questions of the Practice of all necessary Points, and to improve the Gifts of others that we converse with, to give Satisfaction. Perhaps God hath laid up in others

Satisfaction to our Souls, and hath so determined that we shall be perplexed with Scruples, till we have Recourse to some, whom He hath appointed to be helpful to us in this Kind. Many go Mourning a great Part of their Days, because they do not open their State to others. You see here the contrary Practice of these Professors; they double the Question to the Church, *What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, O thou fairest among Women, what is thy Beloved more than another Beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*

Now comes the Church's Answer to these Professors Questions, setting forth her Beloved's Beauty: *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the Chiefest among ten Thousand.*

WE will take that which is safe, because we will have sure Footing (as near as we can) in this mystical Portion of Scripture. A Complexion mixed of white and ruddy, is the most beautiful, therefore the Church sets out the Beauty and spiritual Excellency of *Christ* thereby. But this may be understood of that most excellent Mixture that makes such a Gracefulness in *Christ*. In Him there is wonderful Purity and Holiness, and yet a wonderful Weakness. There is the great GOD, and a Piece of Earth, in one Person; a bloody pierced, and a glorious shining, Body; Humility and Glory: Justice, wonderful Justice, and yet exceeding Love and Mercy; Justice to his Enemies, Mercy to his Children. Therefore *Bernard* saith well, *When I think of Christ, I think at once of GOD, full of Majesty and Glory, and at the same Time of Man, full of Meekness, Gentleness and Sweetness.* So let us consider *Christ* as the great GOD, and withall as a meek Man; the one to establish our Souls, that He is able to do great Matters, the other to draw us

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to Him because He loves us. We are afraid to go to God, a consuming Fire; but let us think we go to our Brother, to One that loved us more than his own Life, and this will endear Him to us and make Him lovely in our Eyes. Indeed He is spiritually lovely, *the chiefest of ten Thousand*. The Church sets Him out by Comparison, a Standard-bearer, of ten Thousand: For, as the goodliest Men use to carry the Ensign, the Banner; so He, the Goodliest of all other, is the Standard-bearer.

WHAT is excellent in the Heavens? The Sun? So *Christ* is the Sun of Righteousness. The Stars? He is the bright Morning Star. The Light? *He is the Light of the World*. Come to all Creatures, you have not any excellent among them, but *Christ* is stiled from it: *He is the Lion of the Tribe of Juda, the Lilly and the Rose, and the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World, the Tree of Life*. There is not a Thing necessary to Nature, but you have a Stile from it given to *Christ*, to shew that He is as necessary as Bread and Water, and the Food of Life. When we see Light therefore, think of the true Light: When the Sun, think of the Sun of Righteousness: So remember the Bread and Water of Life in our common Food. Therefore the Sacraments were ordained, that as we go to the Sea by the Conduct of Rivers, so we might go to the Sea of all Excellency and Goodness, by the Conduct of these Rivers of Goodness to be led by every Excellency in the Creature to that of our Mediator *Christ*, who is *the chiefest among ten Thousand*.

To come more particularly to speak of his Excellencies: omitting his two Natures in one Person God and Man, consider his Offices, a King, Priest, and Prophet: He being the chief in all these,
all

all good Kings before Him were Types of Him; as also the Prophets and Priests; He was all in one. Never any before Him was King, Priest, and Prophet, as He was King, Priest, and Prophet in one. Such a King, as is King of Kings, and subdueth Things unconquerable to all other Kings, the World, Death, Hell, and Sin: Such a King as rules over the Soul and Conscience (the best Part of Man) where He establisheth Peace: Such a King as sets up his Kingdom in our Hearts, guides our Thoughts, Desires, Actions, and Affections: Such a King as carries the Government on his Shoulders and devolves not the Care to another: So that in Regard of this Office He is *the chiefest among ten Thousand*.

AGAIN, as a Priest: Such an High-Priest as offered Himself a Sacrifice by his eternal Spirit: He, as God, offered up his Manhood: Such a Priest as hath satisfied the Wrath of God, and reconciled God to Man: Such a Priest as never dies, but lives for ever to make Intercession for us in Heaven, by Virtue of that Sacrifice which He offered in the Days of his Flesh: He was both Priest and Sacrifice: Such a Priest as is touched with our Infirmities, so mild is He and gentle; so full of Pity and Mercy. No Priest to this Priest; God only smelt a sweet Smell from this Sacrifice.

AND for his prophetical Office: He is a Prophet beyond all others; such a one as can instruct the Soul. Other Men can propound Doctrines, but He can open the Understanding, and hath the Key of the Heart, the Key of *David*, which can open the Soul. By his holy Spirit He can make the Simple full of Knowledge. Such a Prophet as hath his Chair in the very Heart of a Man. This great Bishop of our Souls, the Angel of the Covenant, the Mess-

Messenger of the Father, is the *chief of ten Thousand*, whether you consider Him as a King, Priest, or Prophet.

LET us then that profess ourselves to be in *Christ*, to be joined to Him that is thus excellent, make Him the Rule of our Choice in other Things. In the Choice of Friends, chuse such as are Friends to *Christ*. Take Heed of Society with Idolaters, or with prophane Persons. If we are joined to *Christ*, then let us join to none but those that we can enjoy with *Christ*. In Marriage let the Rule of Choice be, the Love of *Christ*: And let the Measure of our Respect to all Things be, the Respect to *Christ*. Let us measure our Love to Wife and Children, to Kindred, Friends, and to all Creatures whatsoever, so as it may stand with Love to *Christ*. Obey in the LORD, marry in the LORD, do all Things in the LORD, so as may stand with the Love and Allowance of the LORD. And if *Christ* be set in the highest Place in our Heart; if we crown Him there, and make Him King of Kings, and LORD of Lords, in a hearty Submitting of all the Affections of the Soul to Him; while the Soul continues in that Frame, it cannot be drawn to Sin, Discomfort and Despair. The Honours, Pleasures and Profits of Men, what are these to *Christ*? When the Soul is rightly possess'd of *Christ* and of his Excellency, it disdains that any Thing should come in Competition with Him.

AGAIN, this Exalting of *Christ* stands firm against all Discouragements; for it sets *Christ* against all, who is the *chief of ten Thousand*. The Soul will set *Christ* against the Wrath of GOD, against Satan and all our spiritual Enemies. *Christ* is the Angel of the Covenant. Satan is a Lion, a roaring Lion;
Christ

Christ is the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah*: *Satan* a Serpent, a Dragon; But *Christ* is the true brazen Serpent, the very Looking upon Whom will take away all the Stings of *Satan*. Faith overcometh the World; all Things in the World; on the right Hand, Pleasures, and Profits, and Honours; and on the left Hand, Threatnings, Pains, Losses, and Disgraces, by setting *Christ* against all.

IF we would thus value *Christ*, beg of God a Spirit that we may judge aright of our Corruptions; For, in what Measure we discern the Height, and Breadth, and Depth of our corrupt Nature, in that Measure shall we judge of the Height and Breadth, and Depth of the Excellency of *Christ*. The sweetest Souls are the most humble Souls. Those that love *Christ* most, are those that have been stung most with the Sense of their Sins. *Where Sin most abounds, in the Sense and Feeling of it, Grace much more abounds in the Sense and Feeling of that.* Did ever Soul love *Christ* more than that Woman that had so many Devils cast out of her? It is our Saviour *Christ*'s own Reason, therefore those two go always with the true Church: 1. The true Knowledge of the Corruption of Nature: And 2. The true Feeling of it, with hearty Sorrow for it. In *Papery* they slight original Sin; actual Sins are venial Sins; and many Sins are no Sins. And therefore they esteem so slightly of *Christ*, that they join Saints, Works and Satisfaction with Him; because they know not the Depth of the Malady, how black Sin is, what a cursed Estate we are in by Nature: They have slight, shallow, and weak Conceits of Sin, therefore they have weak, and shallow Conceits of *Christ*, and of his Righteousness.

THE Church had given a general Description of *Christ* before, as the Chiefest among ten Thousand; she

He now descends to Particulars: *His Head is as fine Gold, his Locks are bushy and black as a Raven.*

As GOD and Man, his Head is as fine Gold; that is, his Government is a most sweet and golden Government. *Dan. ii.* you have an Image of the Monarchies, the first whereof had a golden Head, which was the *Chaldean*. The best Monarchy is set out by the best Metal, Gold: So *Christ*, the Head of the Church is a precious Head, a Head of Gold. A Head hath an Eminency above all others, an Influence and Motion above all other Parts: So this golden Head is more eminent than all, governs the whole Church, and hath Influence on all; *In Him we live, and move, and have our Being.*

His Locks are bushy and black as a Raven. I think this is but complemental, to fill up the other, therefore not particularly to be stood upon.

His Eyes are as Doves Eyes by the Rivers of Waters, washed with Milk and fitly set. His Eyes are as Doves Eyes, cleansed and washed, that they may be the clearer and see better. The Dove hath many Enemies, especially Birds of Prey; therefore God hath given that Creature a quick Sight. Thus the Scripture helps us to conceive of the Quickness of *Christ's* Eye. *Rev. v. 6.* *Christ* is set forth, as having seven Eyes, and seven Horns: He hath not only Horns of Power, as the Enemies have Horns of Violence; but seven Eyes: that is, a quick Sight to see all the Dangers the Church is in. *Seven* is a Word of Perfection; and in that He is said to have seven Eyes; it means, that He hath many Eyes, an accurate Sight. He hath an Eye of Providence over the whole World. All Things are naked and open before his Eyes; He can see thro' us; He knows our very Hearts and Reins; which he must do, because He must be our Judge. He

He that is Judge of All, had need to have Eyes that will pierce through all.

HIS Cheeks are as Beds of Spices, and as sweet Flowers. Cheeks are the Grace of the Face; they are used here to denote the Presence of *Christ*; not only his glorious Presence in Heaven, but his spiritual Presence in his Ordinances here: this is as Spices and Flowers. Indeed, Cheeks, Face, and Presence present Colours to the Eyes; and not Smells; as Spices and Flowers, which are the Object of another Sense. But you must note, that *Christ* is the Object of all the Senses. He is not only Beauty to the Eye, but Sweetness to the Smell and to the Taste. Therefore Faith hath the Name of all the Senses, to see, hear, taste, and smell, and doth all, because it carries us to *Christ*, that is instead of All to us.

IN speaking of the Particulars that follow, we are to be very wary, for we have not that Foundation as we have in other Generals. No doubt the Spirit of GOD did more intend to set out the large Affection that the Church had to *Christ*, than to insinuate any great Particularity in every one of these: therefore let us only cull out, and take those Things that are of more easy Explication.

HIS Lips are as Lillies dropping down sweet Myrrh: That is, his Doctrine is as sweet as the Lillies, and like Myrrh, keeping from Putrefaction. The Speech of *Christ* makes the Soul sound that embraceth it. This is one Excellency of *Christ* and his Truth, that it preserves the Soul in a pure State. There is Nothing keeps the Soul but the Word; whereas, on the other Side, Error is of a putrifying Nature, corrupting and defiling the Soul. What was ever more sweet than the Truth of *Christ*?

Christ? When He spake Himself, they all hung upon his Lips. Grace was in his Lips; all was sweet that came from Him; his Words were dy'd in the Affections of his Heart. In the learned Language, the same Word signifieth Speech and Reason, to intimate that Speech is but the Current of Reason; therefore *Christ's* Speeches were sweet, because his Heart was full of Love, Mercy, and Goodness.

BELOVED, let us hence take a Trial of ourselves what our Condition is; whether the Words that come from *Christ*, when he speaks in his Ministry to us, be sweet or not. The Word to some Men, is like the Northern Air, which parcheth and cutteth. *Ahab* could not endure the Breath of *Elijah*; nor *Herodias* the Breath of *John Baptist*, nor the *Pharisees* the Breath of *Stephen* and *Paul*: So many now cannot endure the Breath of Divine Truth when it cuts and pierceth. These Words are Arrows that stick; if they stick not savingly, they stick killingly: But if we cannot endure *Christ's* Breath, we are not his Spouse, nor have any Communion with Him.

His Hands are as Gold Rings set with Beryll. Hands are the Instruments of Action. *Christ's* Actions are precious: Whatsoever He doth to the Church, nay even when He doth use evil Men to afflict, He hath a Hand there, a golden, a precious Hand. In the evil Hand of wicked Men God doth all Things by *Christ*; He is as it were God's Hand which all Things pass through.

His Belly is as bright Ivory overlaid with Sapphires. His Belly; that is, his inward Parts: In the Hebrew it is used for the inward Affections. They are as bright Ivory overlaid with Sapphires;

phires; that is, they are pure. All *Christ's* Affections are wondrous good; his Loye, his Desires, his Joys, his Hatred, all are pure; like pure Water in a Chrystal, it may be stirred sometimes, but still it is clear, there are no Dregs at the Bottom.

His Legs are as Pillars of Marble set on Sockets of fine Gold: That is, all his Ways are constant and firm even as Pillars of Marble. *Christ* is the same Yesterday, To-day, and forever. In Regard of his Enemies, *Rev. i.* He is set out in another Manner, as having Legs of Brass to trample them in Pieces: But in Respect of his constant Truth and Ways of Goodness to his Church, his Legs are as Pillars of Marble.

His Countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars. *Lebanon* was a goodly Forest, lying on the North-side of *Judea*, wherein were excellent Plants of all Kinds, especially Cedars. *Christ* his Countenance is as *Lebanon*, excellent as the Cedars; that is, his Presence is stately and majestic; so it is, and will be, when He shews Himself for the vindicating of his Church. Then the Enemies thereof shall know that his Presence is as *Lebanon*, and excellent as the Cedars.

His Mouth is most sweet. She doubles this Commendation: She had said before, *His Lips are as Lillies dropping sweet Myrrh*; here she saith again of his Mouth, *it is most sweet*; to shew, That the chief lovely Thing in *Christ* comes from his Heart, by his Words and Lips. The most excellent Thing we can think of, is the Expression of the Heart of God in *Christ*, and of *Christ's* Love to us.

HE is altogether lovely: Lovely to GOD, to us, to the Soul; lovely to Him that can best judge of
Love.

Loveliness; GOD cannot but love his own Image. He is lovely also, as Man; for He was pure and holy; lovely, as Mediator by Office; for He was anointed by GOD to convey the Father's Love to us. He must needs be lovely, in whom all others are loved. *This is my beloved Son,* (said GOD) *in whom I am well pleased;* out of Him I am well pleased with none. And indeed He was filled with all Graces that might make Him lovely: All the Treasures of Wisdom are in Him; He is made a Storehouse of all that is good for us.

CHRIST is lovely to GOD his Father, in whatsoever He did or suffered. GOD loved Him especially, *Because He was obedient even unto the Death of the Cross, therefore GOD gave Him a Name above all Names, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow both in Heaven and Earth.* The Angels look upon Him with Admiration, they attend Him, and account it an Honour to wait upon Him. He is lovely to all above us, and shall He not be lovely to us?

BUT you will say, "Was He lovely when He was nailed on the Cross, hung between two Thieves; when He wore a Crown of Thorns, was whipped, laid groveling on the Ground; when He sweat Water and Blood; when He was laid in his Grave? Oh! yes, then He was most lovely of all to us. By how much the more He was abased for us, this makes Him more lovely. When Greatness and Goodness meet together, how goodly is it? Majesty alone is not lovely, but awful; but joined with such condescending Grace is wondrous amiable. How lovely a Sight is it to see so great a Person to be so meek and gentle? It was so lovely in the Eyes of the Disciples, that they stood and wonder'd to see Him, who was the eternal Word of the
B b 2 Father,

Father, condescend to talk with a poor *Samaritan* Woman. And what Loveliness of Carriage was in Him to *Peter*, after he had denied and forsworn Him, yet to love him as much as ever He did before. In a Word, what Sweetness, Gentleness, Bowels of Meekness and Compassion, did He always discover to all those that were in Misery?

Is *Christ* altogether lovely, so lovely to us, and so beloved of GOD the Father? Let us then rest upon his Righteousness; for GOD cannot refuse that Righteousness, whose Subject is altogether lovely. Let us come cloathed in the Garments of our elder Brother, and then we need not doubt of Acceptance; for if we put on *Christ's* Righteousness, we put on GOD's Righteousness, and then how can GOD hate us? No more than He hates his own Son; nay, He loves us, and that with the same Love wherewith He loves Him; for He loves whole *Christ* mystical, Head and Members. Let this strengthen our Faith then, that if *Christ* be so altogether lovely in Himself and to the Father, then we may rest ourselves on the Acceptation of his Mediation that is so beloved a Mediator.

AGAIN, if *Christ* be so lovely, here only we have whereupon to spend the Marrow of our best Affections. Is it not Pity we should lose so much of our Affections as we do upon other Things? *Christ* is altogether lovely, why should we dote upon other Things, and set up Idols in our Hearts? Is He altogether lovely, and shall not He have altogether our Affections? Let us labour to place all our Love, Joy and Delight upon *Christ*, who is altogether lovely. When we suffer a pure Stream to run through a dirty Channel, our Affections to run after the Things of the World, which are worse than

than ourselves, we lose our Affections and ourselves.

LET therefore the whole Stream of our Affections be carried unto *Christ*. Love Him and whatsoever is his; for He being altogether lovely, all that comes from Him is lovely; his Promises, his Directions, his Counsels, his Children, his Sacraments are all lovely. Whatsoever hath the Stamp of *Christ* upon it, let us love it; we cannot bestow our Hearts better. To lose ourselves in the Love of *Christ*, and to forget ourselves and the Love of all, yea, to hate all in Comparison of Him, and to account all Dung and Dross compared with *Christ*, is the only Way to find ourselves. And indeed we have a better Condition in Him, than in the World, or in ourselves: Sever'd from Him, our Condition is vain and will become Nothing; but that we may have in Him is admirable and everlasting. We cannot conceive the Happiness which we poor Wretches are advanced to in *Christ*, and what excellent Things abide for us from the Love of God to us in *Christ*: Therefore let us labour to kindle in our Hearts an Affection towards *Christ*, all that we can, considering that He is thus lovely.

LET us now make a Trial, whether *Christ* be thus lovely to us or no. How do we value Him? What Place should He have in our Hearts? If he be the chief of ten Thousand, let us rather offend ten Thousand than offend Him. Let us say with *David*, *whom have I in Heaven but Thee!* and when the Soul can say to *Christ* or any that is *Christ's* (for I speak of Him in the Latitude of his Truths, Promises, Sacraments, and Communion with his Children) *what have I in Heaven but Thee!* then it is in a happy Condition.

IN the next Place, are we ready to suffer for *Christ*? We see the Church here endures any thing for *Christ*. She was misused of the Watchmen, and her Vail taken away, yet notwithstanding she loves *Christ* still. Do we stand ready to suffer for *Christ*, to be disgraced and censured, and yet are we resolved not to give over? Nay do we love *Christ* the more, and stick to his Truth the faster? Certainly where the Love of *Christ* is, there is a Spirit of Fortitude. You have some that for Frowns of Greatness, Fear of Loss, or Hope of Rising, will warp their Conscience and do any thing. Where now is Love to *Christ*? He that loves *Christ*, loves Him the more for his Cross. The more we suffer for Him, the more dear He will be to us. For He doth present Himself in Love and Comfort most to those that suffer for Him; therefore their Love is increased.

AGAIN, where Love is, there it enlargeth the Heart, which being enlarged enlargeth the Tongue also. The Church hath never enough of Commending *Christ*, and of Setting out his Praise. Love will alter a Man's Disposition, as we see in Experience. Love will make a Man of base Nature, liberal: Him that is slow of Speech, eloquent. Let a Man love *Christ*, and though before he could not speak a Word in Commendation of Him, you shall have Him speak and labour earnestly in the Praises of GOD. Those that cannot speak of *Christ*, or for *Christ*, where is their Love? Put any worldly Man to speak of what he loves, he hath Wit and Words at Will; but put him to a Theme of Piety, and he is out of his Element: But tis not so with those that have felt the Love of GOD in *Christ*. How full is S. Paul? He cannot speak of *Christ*, but He is in the Heighth, Breadth, Length, and Depth

Depth of the Love of GOD in *Christ*, and the Knowledge of GOD above all Knowledge!

AGAIN, the Church here is never content 'till she find *Christ*: Whatsoever she had, nothing contents her, while she wants her Beloved: She goes up and down inquisitive after Him 'till she find Him: So it is with a Christian, if he have lost (by his own Fault) his former Communion with *Christ*, he will not rest nor be satisfied, but searcheth in the Use of this and that Means; he runs through all GOD's Ordinances 'till he find *Christ*; Nothing in the World will content him, neither Honour, Riches, Place, or Friends, 'till he find that which he once enjoyed, but hath now lost, the Comfort and Assurance of GOD's Love in *Christ*.

If a Man can sit down contented with other Things, and want *Christ* and the Assurance of Salvation, it is a Sign that Man is in an ill Condition. The Desire of a christian Soul is ever after *Christ*; it longs oftentimes even to be dissolved, and to be with *Christ*. The Saints in the New Testament, are set out by this Description, they were such as loved the Appearing of our LORD *Jesus Christ*. How can it be otherwise? If they love *Christ*, they love the Appearing of *Christ*, wherein we shall be made lovely, as He is lovely.

You see how large the Church is in setting out the Excellency of her Beloved; and then she shuts up all (being able to say no more) justifying our Cause, *This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend*. Do you wonder that I seek so much after Him? Or, wonder you at Christians, when they take such Pains to keep their Communion with *Christ*, in a holy Walking with GOD? These are no Wonders, if you consider how excellent *Christ* is, what He hath

hath done for us, and what He keeps for us in another World; that He will preserve us to his heavenly Kingdom, 'till He put us into Possession of that glorious Condition that He hath purchased. Let the Hearts of Men dwell upon these Things, and you shall see that GOD's Children are rather to be blamed, that they are no more careful, watchful, and industrious, than to be taxed that they are so too much.

Now the Daughters of *Jerusalem* hearing the Church express her Affection for her Beloved so ardently, and give so glorious a Description of Him, they enquire of her farther, *Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou Fairest among Women? Whither is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek Him with thee?* And indeed if their former Question, "What is *Christ* above all others," be answered satisfactorily, this will follow, Where is He? How shall I seek Him? For if we did once know what *Christ* is, we should be sure with the Daughters of *Jerusalem* to ask, *Whither is He gone, that we may seek Him with thee?*

Now because it is the special Office of the Ministry to unfold the hidden Mysteries of *Christ*, labour we therefore to be alway speaking somewhat about *Christ* or tending that Way. When we speak of the Law, let it drive us to *Christ*; when of moral Duties, to teach us to walk worthy of *Christ*. *Christ* or somewhat tending to *Christ* should be our Theme and Mark to aim at.

THUS far of the Question: Now we have the Church's Answer to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*: *My Beloved is gone into his Garden, to the Beds of Spices, to feed in the Gardens, and to gather Lillies.* The Questions were not for a bare Satisfaction, but from

from a Desire they that proposed them had to seek *Christ*; therefore the Church answered: *My Beloved is gone into his Garden to the Beds of Spices to feed in the Gardens.* The Church directly answers the Question; for there is no Envy in spiritual Things. In Grace and Glory all may share alike.

GOD hath two Gardens, one on Earth and one in Heaven. The Church Catholick is his Garden on Earth; and every particular Church are Beds of Spices; in Regard that many Christians are sown there, that *Christ's* Soul delights in, as in sweet Spices.

To feed in the Gardens, and to gather Lillies: that is, Having first planted them, He comes to gather them, and transport them out of the Garden here, to the Garden in Heaven. Those that are good Plants in the Paradise of the Church, shall be glorious Plants in the Paradise of Heaven.

CHRISTIANS are compared to Lillies, for their Purity and Whiteness, being unspotted, first, in Justification; and afterwards in Holiness, wherein at length (though they may have gotten some fresh Spots) they shall be wholly unspotted: It is the End (*Ephes. i. 4.*) they are chosen to, to be holy, without Blame before Him, in Love.

THIS may comfort us in all Wants whatsoever: God will take Care for us. *Christ* useth this Argument; GOD, saith He, cloatheth the Lillies of the Field; He cares even for the meanest Plants, and will He not take Care for you, O ye of little Faith? Doth He care for Lillies that are To-day, and Tomorrow are cast into the Oven, and shall He dot care for the Lillies of Paradise? Undoubtedly He will. Our Saviour *Christ's* Reason is undeniable; he that puts

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puts such a Beauty upon the poor Plants that flourish in the Morning and wither before Night; He that puts such a Beauty upon the Grass of the Field, will He not put more Excellency upon his Children? Will He not provide for them, feed them? Undoubtedly He will.

CHRIST is said to gather these Lillies; that is, He will gather them together. *Christ* will not have his Lillies scattered; though He leaves them oft alone for a While, yet He will gather them to Congregations and Churches. The Name of a Church in the Original is, *Ecclesia*, which is nothing but a Company gathered out of the World. Do we think that we are Lillies by Nature? No, we are Thorns and Briars. GOD makes us Lillies, and then gathers us to other Lillies, that one may strengthen another. The Spirit of GOD in his Children is not a Spirit of Separation of Christians from Christians; but a Spirit of Separation from the waste Wilderness of the World. The Spirit of GOD severs Thorns, and gathers Lillies; gathers Christians together in the Church, and will gather them forever into Heaven.

Now follows a kind of triumphant Acclamation upon all the former Passages. When the Church had spoken formerly of her ill Dealing with *Christ*, and how He thereupon absented Himself from her, she shuts up all with this, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine: He feedeth among the Lillies.* She now begins to feel some Comfort from *Christ*, who had estranged Himself from her for a while: O! (saith she) notwithstanding all my Sufferings, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.* Words passionately expressing long look'd-for Consolation, and the wondrous Joy and Content, the Church now had in *Christ*, having her Heart inflamed with Love unto Him, upon his manifesting Himself to her Soul.

Soul. Affections have Eloquence of their own. Fear hath a proper Expression: Love vents itself in broken Words and Sighs, in a peculiar Eloquence suitable to the Heighth of the Affection: So that here is more in the Words breathed from such an inflamed Heart than in ordinary Construction can be pick'd out.

AND, first, they express the Union of Persons which is before all Comfort and Communion of Graces; *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.* *Christ's* Person is ours, and our Persons are his; for as it is in Marriage, if the Person of the Husband be not the Wife's, his Goods are not hers, (for these come all to her, because his Person is hers) so it is in this mystical Marriage; that which entitles us to Communion of Graces, is Union of Persons betwixt *Christ* and his Church. And indeed nothing else will content a Christian; he would not care so much for any Ordinance, not for Heaven itself, if he had not *Christ* there.

FROM this Union of Persons comes a Communion of all other Things whatsoever. If *Christ* Himself be mine, then All is mine; what He hath done, what He hath suffered is mine; his Privilege to be the Son of God, and Heir of Heaven, is mine. Why? Because Himself is mine. So it is here with the Church: *I am my Beloved's*, my Person is his, to glorify Him, and to lay it down when He will; my Goods are his, my Reputation his; I am content to sacrifice All for Him; I am his, all mine is his. So you see there is mutual Union and Communion. The Original hereof is *Christ's* Uniting and Communicating Himself to his Church first. What hath the Stream or Cistern in it, but what is had from the Spring? *We love Him, because He loved us first.* It was a true Speech of
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Augustine, Whatsoever is good in the World or lovely, it is either GOD or from GOD; it is either *Christ* or from *Christ*. It is said in Nature, Love descends; the Father and the Mother love the Child, before the Child can love them. Love, indeed, is of a fiery Nature; only here is the Diffimilitude, Fire ascends, Love descends; it is stronger descending from the greater to the less, than ascending from the meaner to the greater. GOD loves us more than we can love Him. Neither is there only a Priority of Order (He loves us first, and then we love Him); but also of Causality, He is the Cause of our Love; not by Way of Motive only (He loves us, and therefore from an ingenuous Spirit we must love Him again); but He gives us his Spirit, circumciseth our Hearts to love Him; for all the Motives or moral Persuasions in the World, without the Spirit, cannot make us love. We are taught of GOD to love one another, our Brethren whom we see daily; much more need we be taught to love Him whom we never saw: So that his Love kindles ours by Way of Reflection.

GOD works both Parts, his own and our Parts too; our Love to Him, our Fear of Him, our Faith in Him; He works all, even as He shews his own Love to us. If GOD love us thus, what must we do? Meditate upon his Love; let our Hearts be warmed with the Consideration of it; let us bring them to that Fire of his Love, and then they will wax hot within us; and beg the Spirit; LORD thou hast promised to give thy Spirit to them that ask it, and to circumcise our Hearts to love Thee, and to love one another: Give thy holy Spirit as Thou hast promised.

IN Fine, these Words, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*, to join them both together, imply

imply a mutual Propriety: *Christ* hath a Propriety in me, and I in *Christ*. *Christ* is mine, and so as I have none in the World beside: *Whom have I in Heaven but Christ? And what is there in Earth in Comparison of Him?* He is mine, and mine in a peculiar Manner; and I am his in a peculiar Manner.

AGAIN: These Words imply mutual Love: All is mutual in them; mutual Propriety, mutual Peculiarity, and mutual Love. I love *Christ* so as I love Nothing else; as *Christ* loves me and every Christian more than any Thing else. He loves all, and gives outward Benefits to all, but to me hath given Himself: As the Husband loves all in the Family, his Cattle and his Servants, but he gives himself to his Spouse. So *Christ* is mine, Himself is mine, and myself am *Christ's*: He hath my Soul, my Affections, my Body, and all; He hath a Propriety in me, and a Peculiarity in me; He hath my Affection and Love to the uttermost, as I have his.

AGAIN: They imply mutual Familiarity. *Christ* is familiar to my Soul, and I to *Christ*. He discovers Himself to me in the Secret of his Love, and I discover myself to Him in Prayer and Meditation, opening my Soul to Him upon all Occasions. God's Children have a Spirit of Prayer, which is a Spirit of Fellowship, and talks (as it were) to God in *Christ*: It is the Language of a new-born Christian: He cries to his Father: There is a Kind of Familiarity between him and his God in *Christ*, who gives the Entrance and Access to God.

THEN again they imply mutual Likeness. He is mine and I am his; the one is a Glass to the other.

other. *Christ* sees Himself in me, I see myself in Him. For this is the Issue of spiritual Love, especially, that it breeds Resemblance of the Party loved in the Soul that loveth. I am his, I resemble Him; I am his, I carry his Picture in my Soul. *Christ* out of Love became like me in all Things, except wherein I am like the Devil; and if He became like me, I will be as like Him as possible. Every Christian carries the Character of *Christ*'s Disposition. You may know *Christ* in every Christian; for as the King's Coin carries the Stamp of the King, *Cæsar*'s Coin bears *Cæsar*'s Supercription: So every Christian Soul is God's Coin, and He sets his own Stamp upon it.

AGAIN: These Words, *I am my Beloved's*, and *my Beloved is mine*, imply a mutual Care that *Christ* and the Soul have one of the Good of another. As *Christ* hath a Care of our Good; so a Christian must needs have a Care of *Christ*'s Good, of his Children, Religion, and Truth. What? Will such a Soul say, Shall *Christ* care for my Body, Soul and Salvation, and stoop to come from Heaven to save me, and shall I have no Care for Him and his Glory? He hath left his Truth and his Church behind Him, and shall not I defend his Truth, and stand for the poor Church to the utmost of my Power?

LIKEWISE there is imply'd a mutual Complacency in these Words. *Christ* hath a Complacency and Resting in the Church, and the Church hath a sweet resting Contentment in *Christ*; *Christ* in us and we in Him. A true Christian, when vexed and turmoiled, can rely on this, I have yet a loving Husband, yet I have *Christ*.

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LET this put us upon a Search into ourselves, what we retire to when we meet with Afflictions. Those that have beastly Souls retire to carnal Contentments, to good Fellowship; whereas a Soul that hath any Acquaintance with GOD in *Christ*, so that it may say, *Christ* is mine and I am *Christ's*, will find Contentment and Rest in him, whatsoever it meets with in the World.

“BUT how comes *Christ* to be ours?” *Christ* is ours by his Father's Gift: GOD hath given Him for us. *Christ* is ours by his own Gift; He hath given Himself for us. And *Christ* is ours by his Spirit that witnesseth so much to our Spirits; for the Spirit is given for this Purpose, to shew us all Things that are given us of GOD, whereof *Christ* is the Chief. Therefore the Spirit of *Christ* tells us that *Christ* is ours; and *Christ* being ours, all that He hath is ours.

THAT you may the more fully feed on this, study the Excellencies of *Christ* in the Scripture; the Riches and Honour that He hath, the Favour He is in with his Father, with the Intercession that He makes in Heaven; study his Mercy, Goodness, Offices and Power; and then come home to yourselves, saying, All this is mine, for *Christ* is mine; the Love of GOD is mine, for GOD loves Him, and therefore He loves me, because we are both one. He loves me with the same Love that He loves his Son. Thus we should make Use of this, that *Christ* is ours.

“BUT how are we *Christ's*?” 1. We are his, first by his Father's Gift; for GOD gave Him for us, and gives us to Him, as it is in the excellent Prayer, *John xvii. 6. Father, thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.* I had not them of myself first,

first, but Thine they were, Thou gavest them Me to redeem them; I die for them, I sanctify myself for them that they may be sanctified. 2. We are his by Redemption: *Christ* took his Nature, that He might die for us to purchase us. We cost Him dear. As that froward Woman wrongfully said to *Moses*, *Thou art a bloody Husband unto me*: So *Christ* may without Wrong say to the Church, Thou art a Spouse of Blood to Me. We were indeed to be his Spouse; but first He must win us by Conquest in Regard of *Satan*, and then satisfy Justice. We were in such Debt by Sin, lying under GOD's Wrath, so that 'till all Debts were paid, we could not, in the Way of Justice, be given as a Spouse to *Christ*. 3. We are *Christ's* by Marriage also; for when He purchased us, and paid so dear for us; when He died and satisfied Divine Justice, He did it with a Purpose to espouse us to Himself. We have Nothing to bring Him but Debt and Misery, yet He took upon Him our Nature to discharge all, that He might wed us, and take us to Himself. 4. We are his by Consent: We have passed ourselves over unto Him, He hath given Himself to us, and we have given ourselves to Him back again.

To come to some Uses of this, if we are *Christ's* as *Christ* is ours, 1. It is a Point of wondrous Comfort, GOD will not suffer his own to want. When we are of *Christ's* Family, and not only of his Family, but of his Body, his Spouse, can we think He will suffer us to want that which is needful? 2. It fenceth us against all the Accusations of *Satan*. I am *Christ's*: If *Satan* hath any Thing to say, let Him go to *Christ*. So in all Temptations, send *Satan* whither he should be sent; that is, to *Christ*. 3. This is Ground of Comfort for the Time to come, we are *Christ's* as well as He is ours.

ours. What a Plea doth this put into our Mouths, for all Things that are beneficial to us? **LORD, I am Thine, save me,** (saith the *Psalmist*) Why? save me? Because I am Thine. *I am Thine, LORD, teach me and direct me.* The Husband is to direct the Spouse, the Head should direct all the Senses: All the Treasures of Wisdom are in *Christ*, as all the Senses are in the Head for the Good of the Body. All Fulness dwells in Him; therefore plead with Him, I want Wisdom, teach me how to behave in Troubles, in Dangers, in Fears. If it be an Argument strong enough amongst Men (weak Men) I am Thine, I am thy Child, I am thy Spouse: Shall we attribute more Mercy to ourselves than to the GOD of Mercy and Comfort, who planted these Affections in the Creature? Shall He make Men tender and careful over others, and shall not He Himself be careful of his own Flock? Do we think that He will neglect his Jewels, his Spouse, his Diadem and Crown? He will not.

BUT you will urge Experience, "We see how the Church is used even as a forlorn Widow, as if she had no Husband in the World; as an Orphan that hath no Father; therefore how doth this stand good?" The Answer is, All that the Church or any particular Christian suffers in this World, it is but that there may be a Conformity between the Spouse and the Husband. The Head wore a Crown of Thorns, and went to Heaven through Misery and Abasement in the World, the lowest that ever was: And it is not meet that the Church should go to Heaven another Way.

AND what Hurt do Afflictions do? They only drive the Church nearer to *Christ*. The Church hath never sweeter Communion with *Christ*, than under the greatest Crosses; and therefore they many

Times have proved the Ground of the greatest Comforts.

THUS we see what springs from this, that *Christ* is ours, and that we are *Christ's*. Let us carry this with us even unto Death; and if Times should come that GOD should honour us by serving Himself of us in our Lives; if *Christ* will have us spend our Blood, consider this; I am not mine own in Life nor Death; and it is my Happiness that I am not mine own; for if I were mine own, what should I do with myself? I should lose myself as *Adam* did. It is therefore my Happiness that I am not mine own, that I am not the Worlds, that I am not the Devils, that none else hath to do with me, to claim any Interest in me, but I am *Christ's*: If I do any Thing for others, it is for *Christ's* Sake.

SEE hence the Nature of Faith; for these are the Words of Faith, as well as of Love. Faith hath two Branches, it doth give as well as take. Faith receives *Christ*, and says, *Christ* is mine, and the same Faith saith, I am *Christ's*. Indeed our Souls are empty; so that the main Work of Faith is to be an empty Hand; *Mendica manus* (as *Luther* calls it) a Beggar's Hand to receive; but when it hath receiv'd, it gives back again, both ourselves and all we can do. Where Faith is, there will be a Giving of ourselves and our Goods, our Strength, and all back again. This discovers a great Deal of false Faith in the World; for undoubtedly if it were true Faith, there would be a Yielding back again.

AGAIN, these Words discover the mutual Coherence of Justification and Sanctification, *I am my Beloved's*, and *my Beloved is mine*. *Christ* is mine,

mine, his Righteousness is mine for my Justification: and I am *Christ's*; there is a Return of Faith in Sanctification. The same Spirit that witnesseth *Christ* is ours, sanctifies our Disposition, that we can say, I am *Christ's*. It serves to instruct us therefore in the necessary Connexion of these two, Justification and Sanctification, against the idle Slander of *Papists*, that sinfully traduce that Doctrine, as if we severed Justification from Sanctification: No we hold here, that whensoever *Christ* is ours, there is a Spirit of Sanctification in us, to yield all to *Christ*, tho' this Resignation be not presently perfect.

THIS likewise helps us to understand the Covenant of Grace, and the Seals of the Covenant; what they inforce and comprize; not only what GOD will do to us, but the Duty we are to do to Him again, tho' we do it in his Strength. A Covenant holds not on one Side, but on both; *Christ is mine, and I am Christ's: I will be their GOD*, but they must have Grace *to be my People*, and then the Covenant is made up. The Covenant of Grace is so called, because GOD is so gracious as to enable us to perform our own Part.

AND so in the Seals of the Covenant: In Baptism, GOD doth not only bind Himself to do thus and thus to us, but binds us also to do again to Him. So in the Communion we promise to lead a new Life; therefore we must not think all is well, when we have received our Maker, though we continue in a fruitless Course of Life: No, there is a Promise in the Sacrament, the Seal of the Covenant of Grace, to yield up ourselves to GOD.

WE see here the Nature of Faith in the whole Church, is the same that is in every Particular,
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and the same in every Particular, as it is in the whole Church. The whole Church saith, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine*, I appropriate Him. There is a Spirit of Appropriation in the Whole: And there is so in each Particular. Every Christian may say with *Paul*, *I live by Faith in the Son of GOD, that hath loved me, and gave Himself for me*; and with *Thomas*, *my GOD and my LORD*.

It follows, *He feedeth among the Lillies*. The Church here shews where *Christ* feeds. He both feeds his Church among the Lillies, and delights Himself to be there: The one follows the other, especially it is meant of the Church; those that are his He feeds among the Lillies. How? Lillies are such Kind of Flowers as require a great Deal of Nourishment, and grow best in rich Ground; therefore when she saith, *He feeds among the Lillies*, the Meaning is, He feeds his Church and People in rich Pasture; in such Grounds as are sweet and fruitful; such are, his holy Word, and the Communion of Saints; these are especially the Pastures wherein He feeds his Church. The holy Truths of GOD are the Food of the Soul, whereby it is cherished and nourished up to Life everlasting. This whole Book is a Kind of *Pastoral*; therefore *Christ* in many Places of this Book, takes upon Him the Carriage (as it were) of a loving Shepherd, who labours to find out for his Sheep the fruitfullest and sweetest Pastures, that they may grow up as Calves of the Stall.

If you ask why we must grow up and be fed still? 1. Do but ask your own Souls, whether there be not a perpetual Renewing of Corruption which breaks out every Day. Therefore we have Need to feed every Day anew upon the Promises; upon
old

old Promises with new Affections. Somewhat breaks out ever and anon, which abaseth the Soul of a Christian, that makes him go with a sharp Appetite to the blessed Truths that feed his Soul. 2. Again, we need a great Deal of Strength, which must be fetched from the blessed Word of God, whereby we are able to withstand all the Power of the Devil. Therefore you may see what Kind of Atheistical Creatures those are, and how much they are to be regarded that turn off all with a Compendium in Religion; Tush if we know that we must believe in *Christ* we know enough: As if there were not a Necessity of Growing still further and further in distinct Knowledge. Alas! the Soul needs to be fed continually, it will stagger else and be unsufficient to stand against Temptation, or to perform Duties.

You may see further, that there is Fulness no where but in God's House; that there and there only is that which satisfieth the Soul. Not only the Promises, but the very Rebukes of the Scripture are sweet. They are Rebukes of a Friend and feed the Soul; for we have many Corruptions which hinder our Communion with God, so that a Christian delights to have his Corruptions rebuked; for he knows if he leaves them, he shall grow into further Communion with *Christ*, wherein stands his Happiness in this World, and the Fulness of his Happiness in the World to come.

If this be so, let us know then, that when we come to Religion we lose not the Sweetness of our Lives, but only translate them to a far more excellent Condition. Perhaps we fed before upon (as it were) Gravel; but now we have holy Truths to delight our Soul. Believe it, a Man never knows
what

what Comfort is 'till he be down-right and sincere in Religion. Therefore *Austin* saith of himself, *LORD I see my former Life was nothing but Husks, empty Things; now I know where Sweetness is; it is in thy Word and Truth.* Therefore let us not misconceive of Religion, as of a dull Thing, wherein we must lose all Comfort: No, we have no Comfort 'till we be religious indeed. *Christ* feeds not His among the Thorns and Briars. Dost thou think He feeds thee among unfavoury, harsh Things? No, *He feeds among the Lillies.* Let us make use of this for our Souls Comfort, to make us in Love with the Ways of *Christ*.

THE like Place you have, *Isa. xl. ii.* *He shall feed his Flock like a Shepherd; He shall gather the Lambs with his Arms, and carry them in his Bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with Young: So He leads them into the Pastures and feeds them plentifully and sweetly; not only with sweet Things, but with tender Care.* As a Shepherd, He takes in to his Bosom the poor Lambs that cannot walk themselves; and the Sheep that are heavy with Young, He cares for them. He gently leads them that are poor, weak Christians, that struggle with many Temptations and Corruptions. *Christ* hath a tender Care of them, He carries them (as it were) in his Bosom and in his Arms, and leads them gently; for indeed all *Christ's* Sheep are weak, every one hath somewhat to complain of; therefore He feeds them tenderly and sweetly, or else they might perish.

CONSIDER then the Necessity of spiritual Strength, that we have need to grow up more and more in Christianity. To be Feeding still, we have need of strong Faith and strong Assurance that

Christ

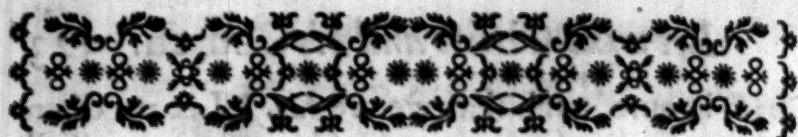
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Christ is ours, and that we are his. Let us often frequent every Ordinance of GOD, and we shall find *Christ* blessing his own Ordinances: So that we shall be able to say in Truth of Heart experimentally and feelingly with the Church, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his: He feedeth among the Lillies.*



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